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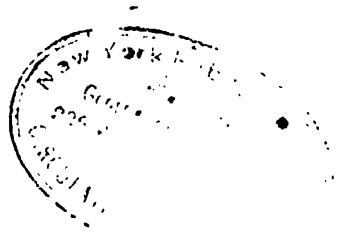
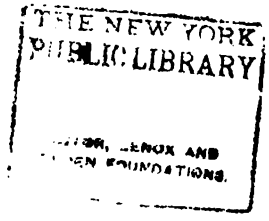
# THE CARLYLE COUNTRY

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From a painting by J. McNeill Whistler.

Thomas Carlyle

# THE CARLYLE COUNTRY

## WITH A STUDY OF CARLYLE'S LIFE

BY

J. M. SLOAN

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*The author begs to acknowledge most gratefully much valuable aid received from descendants of the Carlyle family, and others, in collecting the portraits and views of places selected for illustrations, and tracing the footprints of Thomas Carlyle in the Carlyle Country.*

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TO

SIR EDWARD RUSSELL, Kt.

MOST TOLERANT OF SCHOLARS

AND

BEST OF FRIENDS.

TRANSFER FROM C. of C. AUG 1923

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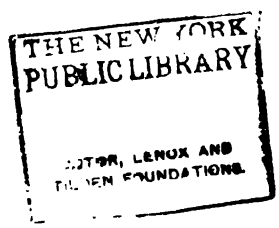
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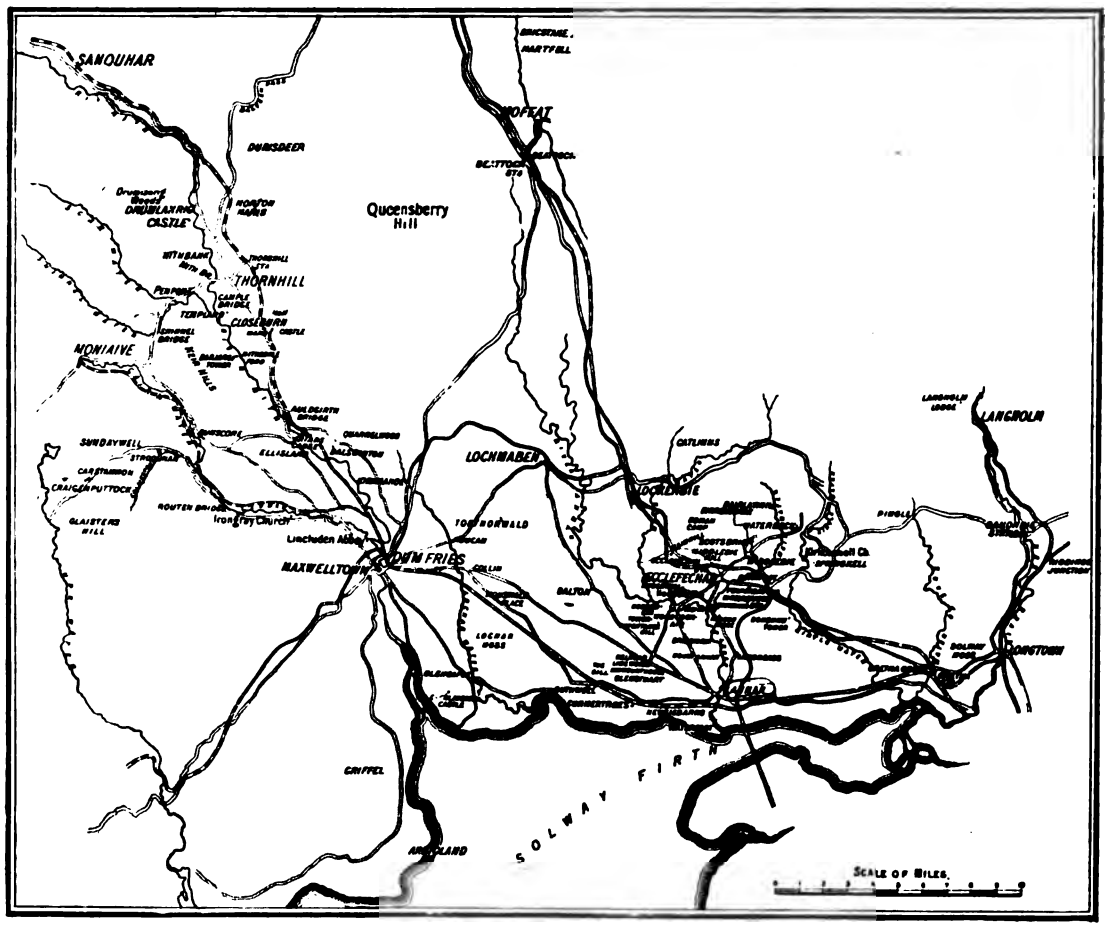
OUTLINE MAP OF THE CARLYLE COUNTRY.

(In Dumfriesshire and the Nithside Corner of Galloway.)

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# THE CARLYLE COUNTRY

## CHAPTER I

## Introductory

THOMAS CARLYLE was born in the village of Ecclefechan, in Mid-Annandale, Dumfriesshire, on the fourth of December, 1795. He died in what is now "the Carlyle House" at Chelsea on the fifth of February, 1881—a weary Titan, in his 86th year, ripe for the rest of death. Throughout the second half of his life, that is to say, from 1834 to 1881, he resided at Chelsea, but the earlier period, which comprehends his apprenticeship to the craft of literature, certain brief intervals excepted, was spent in Annandale and Nithsdale, in the county of Dumfries. Until he was too frail under the burden of years to endure the journey, Carlyle visited his native dales summer by summer. As Antæus was invincible so long as he remained in contact with his mother earth, so Carlyle derived physical recuperation and emotional stimulus from continuous contact with Annandale, which was his "cave of Trophonius"—the seat of the oracle he never consulted in vain.

Three members, in the main, of the Lowland Scottish clan Carlyle have come to fame, more or less, in modern literature. "Thomas Carlyle of the Scottish Bar," whose renown is confined within the narrow limits of the British Museum Catalogue, was Carlyle's contemporary, called by him his "double-walker," and a prolific writer on matters of ancient ecclesiastical history. The "double-walker" apparently was not related, either by kinship or any other affinity, to Carlyle. Alexander Carlyle, minister of Inveresk for fifty years, known by the *sobriquet* of "Jupiter" Carlyle, was a descendant of

the Carlyles of Annandale. He belonged to the eighteenth century, although his "Autobiography," by which he is known, is a nineteenth century product, its publication having been deferred until it was edited by Dr. J. Hill Burton in 1860. "Jupiter" Carlyle was derived from the stock of the Lords Carlyle of Torthorwald in Dumfriesshire, and was related to some of the Carlyles who were lairds, or gentlemen farmers, in Annandale in the eighteenth century. "Jupiter" and Thomas Carlyle have certain qualities in common. Indeed, if we may judge by the opening sentence of the "Autobiography," it is evident that the mantle of the Inveresk minister, who was a scholar and an excellent word-painter, fell upon the shoulders of the son of the Annandale stonemason. He there remarks[1] "how carelessly, and consequently how falsely, history is written," and declares his intention "to note down certain facts within my own knowledge . . . that may be subservient to a future historian, if not to embellish his page, yet to keep him within the bounds of truth and certainty."

Other parts of Scotland had to do with Carlyle's apprenticeship. He walked for nearly seventy miles across the moors from Ecclefechan to Edinburgh, in order to matriculate at the University there, as a student in arts, at the early age of fourteen. For nearly four years he attended classes there, during the winter half of the year, but took no degree. He was tutor and hack writer there also for the three years between his resignation of the school at Kirkcaldy and his appointment to the Buller tutorship. The storied streets of Edinburgh are associated in Carlylean lore with the mental conflict covered in *Sartor Resartus* by the successive chapters on "The Everlasting No," "The Centre of Indifference," and "The Everlasting Yea;" and in the house at Comly Bank there, the first eighteen months of his married life were spent. Kirkcaldy, too, has its memories and traditions of Carlyle, for he was schoolmaster there for nearly two years, and it was on the shores of Fife that he met Margaret Gordon, the "Blumine" of *Sartor*, when "Teufelsdröckh was made immortal by a kiss." But the dales watered respectively

[1] *Autobiography of Dr. Alexander Carlyle*, p. 1.

by the Annan and the Nith give us the Carlyle country proper, just as the Lake District is the country of Wordsworth; just as Ayrshire from the Doon to the sources of the Nith is the "Land of Burns." Born and reared at Ecclefechan; schooled in Annan, where he subsequently acted as assistant-master in mathematics for two years; occupying tenant for one year of a farm on Repentance Hill; Carlyle's life had made deep roots in the soil of Annandale. The residence of six years at Craigenputtock gives Nithsdale also no unimportant share in his renown. And so the picturesque district, inexhaustible in respect of its historical associations, watered by the rivers Annan and Nith, extending in pleasant groupings of bosky undulations from the shining belt of the Solway Firth into the rugged hill-country of Dumfriesshire and Galloway, is entitled to be ear-marked in literary history as specifically "the Carlyle country."

It was not until Carlyle returned to Scotsbrig in 1853, summoned to the deathbed of "the kind mother," that he could travel all the way by rail, the great trunk lines into Scotland having by that period superseded both the old stage-coach on the high roads, and the voyage by sea to the port of Annan. The tourist from the south nowadays has only to get himself seated in one of the Midland trains, and he will be conveyed through the heart of rural and industrial England, surrounded in his carriage by the fullest club comforts, across the Border into Annandale, at a frugal expenditure of time, and with a degree of personal comfort, which would have been simply inconceivable to Carlyle in the twenties or thirties of the last century. Although the London and North-Western trains run past Ecclefechan on the Caledonian line, there are numerous advantages to be gained by approaching the Carlyle country from the side of Annan.

Between Carlisle and Annan, the clash of steel can still be heard in the historical imagination, for the trains cross the old West March, the scene of many a murderous fray in the bad old times when Border warfare was three-fourths of existence by the Solway. Close to Gretna Station a small burn may be seen making for the sea; it is the Water of Sark, the boundary between Cumberland

and Dumfriesshire. On the banks of this apparently insignificant stream the battle of Sark was fought, in 1449, between 20,000 Englishmen, under the Earl of Northumberland, and 12,000 Scots, led by the Earl of Ormond. On that occasion, the Southrons were defeated and Magnus Redbeard slain. The Scottish spearmen, or pikemen—the spear or pike being eighteen feet six inches long by Act of Parliament—came to close quarters with the English archers victoriously, and left the Sark, as swollen by the tide, red with the blood of thousands slain. The Carlyles of Annandale, ancestors of Thomas Carlyle, fought under Ormond and Wallace at the battle of Sark.

The country for some distance here looks monotonous and uninteresting. There are the signs of profitable mixed farming on all hands, and the homesteads and cottages have an aspect of frugal sufficiency about them. Markets are nearer and better now than was the case a century ago, when James Carlyle required to put forth all his strength to get the rent together at Mainhill.

Soon as the Solway comes into full view, the country grows more interesting. The fleet tides of this vast and peculiar arm of the sea flow across a wide expanse of land; and the pools left by the receding tide, formerly called "The Lakes of Solway," recall the extensive local industry in the manufacture of salt, which was carried on along these wind-swept shores in the middle ages. On the English coast, the mountains of the Lake District rise against the horizon—Skiddaw, Saddleback, Helvellyn. The first view of Criffel beyond the wide estuary of the Nith makes Scotland near, and the spirit of poetry and romance seems to brood over the scene as Wordsworth's lines at the grave of Burns are remembered:—

> "Alas! where'er the current tends,
> Regret pursues and with it blends,—
> Huge Criffel's hoary top ascends
> By Skiddaw seen,—
> Neighbours we were, and loving friends
> We might have been."

The shores of the Solway between the Water of Sark and Lochar Moss were the scene of Scott's *Red Gauntlet*. Sir Walter threw the

local dread of the sea thereabouts into this pungent epigram:—"Who falls asleep by the Solway may wake in the next world." It was along this coast also, that Charles Stewart, after recrossing dolefully the Eden, the Esk, the Sark, the Kirtle, and the Annan, in his retreat from Derby in 1745, led his gallant Highlanders back upon Dumfries, before Culloden had ruined his hopes.

The Carlyle country is worth visiting for its own sake. Since the late Queen Victoria took fashion after her into the Highlands to the north of Stirling or Perth, the tourist has been instructed to commence "doing" Scotland at Edinburgh or Glasgow. The counties to the south of the Forth, in the matter of picturesque and storied qualities, hardly count. This is a fallacy of fashion which the future may be expected to correct, when the Lowland counties with the reflected glory about them derived from the genius and achievement of Burns, Scott, and Carlyle will receive their just share of popular attention. Ruskin relates[1] how Carlyle, when he met Queen Victoria at the Deanery of Westminster, in Dean Stanley's time, while describing the natural beauty of Dumfriesshire and Galloway to the Queen, forgot himself, and fixed the chair upon Her Majesty's dress, keeping her in a position of inability to move until he discovered what had happened, and withdrew the innocent, offending chair. It might be easy to prove that Ruskin was prejudiced, as in most things, in the matter of his perfervid admiration for the Scottish Lowlands; yet it might be difficult to disprove his assertion that "all the highest intellectual and moral powers of Scotland were developed" in the counties on the line of the coast from the Holy Island to Edinburgh, and from Annan to the Mull of Galloway. Ruskin was not writing at random, nor in the mood merely of the prejudiced and contradictious person, in this passage of singular beauty:—[2]

"It was only, I repeat, since what became practically my farewell journey in Italy in 1882, that I recovered the train of old associations by revisiting Tweedside, from Coldstream up to Ashestiel, and the Solway shores from Dumfries to Whithorn; and while what knowledge

[1] *Præterita*, Vol. III, Chap. IV, p. 111. [2] *Præterita*, Vol. III, Chap. IV, p. 119.

I had of southern and foreign history then arranged itself for final review, it seemed to me that this space of low mountain ground, with the eternal sublimity of its rocky seashores, of its stormy seas and dangerous sands; its strange and mighty crags, Ailsa and the Bass, and its pathless moorlands, haunted by the driving cloud, had been of more import in the true world's history than all the lovely countries of the South, except only Palestine."

"Since 1882!" Carlyle was buried in the old graveyard at Ecclefechan in 1881, and no man then living possessed a truer insight of the historical significance of his life, of the moral glory which his ascent from small beginnings in a peasant's cottage to the pinnacle of fame's temple, reflected upon Annandale, of the permanence in literature of his best work, than the writer of *Præterita.*

## CHAPTER II

# Nature in Annandale

ALL Dumfriesshire, like Cæsar's all Gaul, has from of old been divided into three parts—Nithsdale, Annandale (Strathannand), and Eskdale. The Stewartry of Annandale in ancient times (*i.e.*, a district within or under the jurisdiction of a Steward, and so contradistinguished from a Sheriffdom) extended from the Water of Sark to the Lochar. Like its correspondent boundary stream, the Lochar is a considerable burn which traverses the Lochar Moss, about three miles to the south-east of Dumfries, and enters the Solway near to Caerlaverock Castle. This Lochar, which rises in the Tinwald hills and flows well to the north of Torthorwald Castle, the ancient headquarters of the Carlyles, divided the Stewartry of Annandale from the Sheriffdom of Nithsdale. Carlyle was nothing if not an Annandale man; yet, on the maternal side, he was related to Nithsdale, for Margaret Aitken's family belonged to the parish of Kirkmahoe, in Nithsdale.

All three parts, or dales, of the county of Dumfries abound in picturesque natural scenery; so much so that it would be invidious and absurd to give any one of the three precedence. The river Annan rises in the Hartfell range of hills above Moffat, and traverses some forty miles of agricultural and pastoral country before it reaches the Solway below the little old Royal Burgh of the same name, at which, in the main, Carlyle was schooled. For the second twenty miles at least of its curiously crooked, meandering course, the Annan affords quite as many beautiful riverscapes as any river in the South of Scotland. In Nithsdale, there are thirty miles of river scenery that can hardly be surpassed anywhere in the Highlands.

Carlyle was reared in what he most accurately described as "a mildly picturesque country," and not in the starved and treeless waste which Froude mysteriously discovered in his two "flying" visits to Annandale. From the side of nature in respect of its impact upon his imagination in youth, the prose-poetry of Carlyle—such, say, as his *History of the French Revolution* and his *Diamond Necklace* —was not less deeply influenced than were the songs and poems of Burns, and the reflective poetry of Wordsworth. Froude erred by trying to make nature in Dumfriesshire contribute to his dramatic setting, in his otherwise great "Life," of the contrast between the greatness to which Carlyle attained and the poverty, littleness, hardship of his cradle surroundings. From reading Froude alone, we expect to find Annandale a bleak, barren country, where the conditions of existence are as severe and unattractive, as little likely to produce a man of genius, as one of the islands in the Western Hebrides! By visiting Annan and Ecclefechan, this erroneous impression is obliterated from the mind; and a thousand glowing passages of prose-poetry in Carlyle's works, and in his "Letters," acquire fresh significance, and appeal to us with new and more intimate power.

When inviting Jane Welsh to visit his family at the farm of Hoddam Hill (now Repentance Hill), during their courtship in 1825, Carlyle wrote thus:[1]—"I will show you Kirkconnell churchyard and Fair Helen's grave. I will take you to the top of Burnswark, and wander with you up and down the woods, and lanes, and moors. Earth, sea, and air are open to us here as well as anywhere. The water of Milk was flowing through its simple valley as early as the brook Siloa, and poor Repentance Hill is as old as Caucasus itself. There is a majesty and mystery in nature, take her as you will. The essence of all poetry comes breathing to a mind that feels from every province of her Empire."

Froude states that Carlyle's imagination had made this country of his birth and rearing "into fairyland." Not at all. Carlyle has seldom been proved inaccurate in matters personal, or historical, in his writings. He had a passion for facts in every direction. "Few,"

[1] Froude—*First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 299.

HODDOM BRIDGE.

"The country, quiet, airy, wholesome, has real beauty of its kind; and in parts (Hoddom Brig, for example) is even mildly picturesque."—*Carlyle.*

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said Edward Irving, "have such eyes," and he had a singularly accurate eye for the features of the landscape. His Annandale is there, and may yet be seen, showing no essential change since the first forty years of the last century, answering literally to his descriptive allusions.

"I will show you Kirkconnell churchyard and Fair Helen's grave." This allusion introduces us to one of the most lovely nooks of nature in Annandale, a glen within a few miles of Ecclefechan, and one with which Carlyle, in boyhood, was familiar. The scene of this romantic tragedy is on the banks of the Kirtle, a smaller river than the Annan, which enters the Solway at the site of an ancient Druidical Circle, a short distance to the north of the mouth of the Water of Sark. Nature in Annandale, and the appeal nature made to the impressionable imagination of Carlyle in his boyhood and youth, cannot be understood without a visit to the valley of the Kirtle. This may best be accomplished from Annan by following the course of the river as far as Kirkconnell churchyard. The vale of Kirtle, especially from Kirkpatrick-Fleming to Springkell, contains some of the most romantic scenery in the country, and its storied character is represented by the old Bonshaw Tower, associated in local history with the ancient clan of the Irvings.

Beyond Kirtlebridge Station, where, after the railway arrived, Carlyle often left the train from the South for Scotsbrig, the Kirtle flows through a lovely glen which is intimately related to the policies of Springkell; an estate formerly identified with the Maxwells, on which Carlyle's father did a great deal of work when he was a stonemason, before he took to farming at Mainhill. In this glen near to Springkell mansion, much hidden among trees, the old Kirkconnell churchyard is situate. Solitude there is perfect, and the contrast between the perennial loveliness of nature and the fleeting life of the generations of mankind is nowhere more poetically accentuated, not even by Rotha's "living wave" at Grasmere.

Carlyle showed Jane Welsh, during the visit of that epoch-making nine days at Repentance Hill, "Fair Helen's grave." This romantic tradition is associated in the literature of the Borders with the ballad

—"Where Helen lies"—which Carlyle heard recited or sung by the peasants of Annandale in his youth:—

"I wish I were where Helen lies,
For night and day on me she cries,
I wish I were where Helen lies,
On fair Kirkconnell lee," etc.

The tragedy happened on the banks of the Kirtle within a short distance of the churchyard. Helen (Irving, it is supposed, was the surname) threw herself between the quarrelling rivals, received the wound which was intended for her favourite, and fell dead on the spot. Her favourite killed his sweetheart's murderer, and fled to Spain. On his return, he stretched himself upon Helen's grave and died there. The figures of the sword and the cross can still be traced on the rude gravestone, and the words:—*Hic jacet Adam Fleming.* This legend of "fair Helen" of "fair Kirkconnell lee" is the most pathetic of all the Annandale traditions, a tale of the times of James V; and it must have been to young Carlyle for an object-lesson in the immutability of human grief, in the everlastingness, relatively to man's existence on this planet, of such tragic sorrow as it fell to him, when his genius had matured, to describe with inimitable pathos in his picture of the last moments of the fair Marie Antoinette in the *Diamond Necklace*, "the beautiful highborn that wert so foully hurled low!"

ON THE KIRTLE WATER.
Neighbourhood of "Fair Helen's Tragic Death."

Carlyle's nature-worship, his feeling for the beautiful in land-

scape, was, theoretically at least, of the silent sort, but it was all the more real and intense on this account. He detested sentimentality, and denounced the sentimentalist as "the barrenest of all mortals."

"I will show you Kirkconnell Churchyard, and Fair Helen's grave."—*Carlyle to Jane Welsh in* 1825.

Wordsworth's apostrophe in which he prays "the fountains, meadows hills, and groves" to forebode not any severing of their loves, was to Carlyle mere sentimentality, ineffectual and dangerous. When he was on the Rhine, he was sorely tried by the society on deck "lilting about the vine-clad hills." The Highest spoke to him in nature, and one of the articles of his faith was that the Highest could not be spoken of in words; and he found doubtless the *reductio ad absurdum* of popular expression of the feeling for nature in the little anecdote which Mrs. Carlyle committed to one of her note-books thus:—"One Paisley weaver to another, on looking round him on the top of Ben Lomond: 'Eh, Geordie man, the works o' Nature is deevilish!'"[1] Carlyle possessed Byron's love of the mountains.

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. II, p. 112.

The Lake mountains, Criffel and its peers in Galloway, were the first features his eyes sought out when returning to Annandale. But the mildly picturesque appealed to him as well, and the glens and streams of Annandale played an important function in the development of his genius. "Neither say," he wrote at the close of the invaluable chapter on "Organic Filaments" in *Sartor Resartus*, "that thou hast now no symbol of the Godlike; is not God's universe a symbol of the Godlike; is not Immensity a Temple?"

In common with Burns, Carlyle was early influenced by the rivers around his home. He could not weave immortal lyrics of life's love, joy, pain around the Kirtle, the Annan, the Mein Water, the Middlebie Burn, and "the little Kuhbach gushing kindly by" in Entepfuhl (Ecclefechan), but he loved these streams none the less; and he might have passed successfully under Burns's test of the poet who had found the Muse; who could wander solitary by "some trotting burn's meander" without feeling lonesome. The instinct for sport was no part of nature's dower to him. Probably the sporting element in his heredity was played out in the hardships which befell his ancestors; in the Nemesis that came upon "old Tom Carlyle of Brownknowe" in consequence of his neglect of duty under the fascinations of the chase. He was fond of the saddle always, but never in the way of sport; never was he seen in the hunting field. Like Burns, he had a strong aversion to shooting, and was never known to have fired a gun. We get the merest glimpse of the boy Carlyle fishing for eels in the burns at Ecclefechan, but the pastime of fishing, universal in Annandale, where the streams are well stocked with trout, and the Annan abounds in salmon, never appealed to him. So much the worse for his digestion, to be sure! Yet such was the make and mould of our genius. The river becomes part of the angler's life, its murmur circulates in him with his blood. This intimate communion Carlyle did not experience, but he carried these Annandale streams in his imagination, and the impressions they gave him appear in some of his freshest prose. When writing the last paragraph of his *Essay on Burns* at Craigenputtock, in the autumn of 1828, the rivers, and small tributary streams of Annandale gave

him the neatest of similes:—"While the Shakespeares and Miltons roll on like mighty rivers through the country of thought, bearing fleets of traffickers and assiduous pearl-fishers on their waves; this

ON THE MEIN NEAR ECCLEFECHAN.
"This little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye."—*Carlyle.*

little Valclusa Fountain will also arrest our eye: for this also is of Nature's own and most cunning workmanship, bursts from the depths of the earth, with a full gushing current, into the light of day; and often will the traveller turn aside to drink of its clear waters, and muse among its rocks and pines."

The physical geography of Annandale lends itself to effective sunsets. With gentle undulations everywhere, the lower hills are almost nowhere too near, nor the lofty mountains too remote, to prevent the splendours appearing on the horizon which adorn "the clouds that gather round the setting sun." This phase of nature there made a lasting impression upon Carlyle's imagination. He was fond to

employ the metaphors of sunrise and sunset in his imaginative prose, and always in a mood of rare reverence, as if he had drunk deep in youth of the solemn glory of departing day. In the brief, glowing tribute which he paid to the genius and character of Goethe, when the latter died in 1832, he compared his career in letters to sunrise and sunset. "If his (Goethe's) course,"[1] he wrote, "was like the sun's so also was his going down . . . Beautifully rose our summer sun, gorgeous in the fervid east, scattering the spectres and sickly damps, &c. . . . And now, mark also, how he sets! *So stirbt ein Held; anbetungsvoll*—so dies a hero; sight to be worshipped!"

Dumfriesshire has changed less on the side of its natural scenery in the interval since Carlyle's youth, in the first quarter of the last century, than most other counties in the Scottish Lowlands. Here and there woods are abundant, small and large. The plantations are needed, among other less important functions, in order to provide cover for the fox; for the hunt is still for many thereabouts almost the chief end of man, and certainly a health-giving recreation. The hills of Brownmoor and Woodcockair are still completely covered with trees, and it is difficult, indeed, to imagine how, even in the bleakness of mid-winter, Froude could discover a treeless wilderness from the road between Mainhill and Ecclefechan. At midsummer, indeed, the full stretch of the landscape in most parts of Annandale cannot be seen for the woods.

These dales are still, in the main, devoted to pastoral and agricultural pursuits. Mixed farming prevails, cereal crops in the valleys and stock-rearing towards the moorland. The paucity of coal deposits has saved the face of nature, and checked such an invasion of commercialism as has blighted much of Ayrshire and Lanarkshire by its coal-pits, its furnaces, its villages of miners, and all the barbarous immigration so powerfully described in the late George Douglas Brown's remarkable story of *The House with the Green Shutters*. Coal is worked, on a limited scale, at Sanquhar in Nithsdale, and at Canonbie in Eskdale. The chief geological product of the county is red freestone, which is abundant in Annandale and

[1] *Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol. IV.

Nithsdale, providing occupation for the people, and helping to check depopulation. The quarries do not greatly impair the beauty of the landscape. As year by year into old age Carlyle returned to Annandale, the same beautiful country received him through which he had passed, in young wonderment, when his father walked with him from Ecclefechan to Annan and had him enrolled as a pupil at the Academy there; "the red sunny Whitsuntide morning," according to the allusion in *Sartor Resartus*, "when trotting full of hope by the side of Father Andreas, I entered the main street of the place, and saw its steeple-clock (then striking eight)." He was early on the road, for the distance was six good miles, but the road lay through a country sufficiently beautiful to make a fit natural environment then for the great master of prose-poetry that was to be.

## CHAPTER III

# The Clan Carlyle

"OR, on the whole, might we not say, Scott, in the new vesture of the nineteenth century, was intrinsically very much the old fighting Borderer of prior centuries; the kind of man Nature did of old make in that birthland of his?" So wrote Carlyle in the Review-Essay[1] on Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, which he contributed to the *London and Westminster Review* in 1838. Scott and Carlyle were both Scottish Borderers, the former belonging to the East March, the latter to the West, in the Border country. Annandale (Strathannand) extended from the confines of Nithsdale to the West March. These Marches, especially the West March, were the critical frontiers of Scotland. The West March had for its wardens in the feudal times the Maxwells of Nithsdale and Annandale and the Johnstones of Annandale. The Ford of the Esk was the passage proper into Scotland on the side of the West March; the great highway of invasion, or raiding, lay in the heart of the Carlyle country.

No man can escape from his ancestors, not even the man of genius. Quite as truly as Scott, Carlyle "was intrinsically the old fighting Borderer of prior centuries." With this difference, however, that Carlyle inherited the more mixed blood of the Western Border.

Annandale was part of the prehistoric Valentia. Of the tribes of ancient Briton, which ethnology classifies as Celtic in origin, the Selgovae occupied Annandale, and gave the name of "Solway"—the path of the Selgovae—to the encompassing sea. Druidical Circles, burrows, cairns, are still about as food for the antiquarian appetite.

[1] *Miscellaneous Essays*, Vol. VI.

More distinct are the traces of the Romans. In the ear of history the tramp of the Roman soldier can be heard among the glens and hills of the district; by the eye of the antiquarian the Romans can be seen building the high summer camp of Birrenswark on the shoulder of the hill of that ilk which stretches away behind Ecclefechan, some 750 feet above the sea-level; an historical eminence which Carlyle loved to climb, the view from the summit being one of the most extensive views in all the South of Scotland; or inhabiting the summer camp of Birrens ("Burrance" was the old orthography) in the hollow on Middlebie burn, where Carlyle's known ancestors had their home.

Conquering Romans and conquered Celtic Britons alike disappeared, leaving no permanent result of the invasion behind, except the remains of camps, roads, walls, and here and there a Roman name. Next in the chronological sequence, the fierce Picts or Caledonians sweep down upon Strathannand, only in their turn to be driven North by the Scoto-Irish out of the wild westlands of Galloway. Thereafter the Saxons in their thousands, and the Normans in their hundreds, come into this Border country out of the South. By the eleventh century, all these various ethnologic elements got themselves fused somehow into one people—into a distinct type that passes into history as the Annandale Borderer. The face has differentiating features, one of these being the elongated jaw, which Carlyle had, symbolic of dogged pertinacity, of a temperament ever on the watch-tower, not to be caught by chaff, not likely to give itself away in answer to perilous interrogations. By the eleventh century, the language of Annandale was substantially the vernacular of the Scottish Lowlands, with certain heavy vowel sounds peculiar to itself which show linguistic kinship with Cumberland. As a vernacular tongue, it was historically noted for its vocabulary of "swear words," the offspring of the fighting temper of the Borderers. With James Carlyle, stonemason and devoted Burgher, the habit of swearing was checked in the Carlyle descent. But when Carlyle exploded, as he did when on a visit to the mills of Rochdale with the Brights, in what he called "the Annandale accent," the tongue as well as the temper of the old Borderers had returned in him, and his language was hardly innocent in its strength!

The name Carlyle (sometimes printed "Karlo," or "Carle," or "Carleil," or "Carlisle," &c.) represents one of the clans of Annandale, like the other clan names there of Irving, Murray, Johnstone, Maxwell, &c. To this clan, Carlyle himself, in a vague, indefinite, jesting fashion traced his descent. On getting to Scotsbrig, in the spring of 1842, on his return journey from Templand, where he had been detained for some weeks in connection with Mrs. Welsh's death, Carlyle wrote thus in one of his daily letters to his wife :—

"To-day[1] I have lain on a sofa and read the whole history of the family of Carlyle. Positively not so bad reading. I discover there what illustrious genealogies we have; a whole regiment of *Thomas* Carlyles, wide possessions, all over Annandale, Cumberland, Durham, gone all now into the uttermost wreck, absorbed into Douglasdom, Drumlanrigdom, and the Devil knows what. Two of us have written plays, one could carve organs, sculpture horses; Mrs. Jameson's old Carlyle was cousin of Bridekirk. I suppose I, too, must have been meant for a Duke, but the means were dropped in the passage."

The book to which Carlyle alludes, in the above passage, was compiled by an anonymous genealogist, and published in London in 1822. Its title runs thus: *Collection for a History of the Ancient Family of Carlisles.* A copy of this ponderous quarto, in bulk, resembling the smaller Family Bible, had been purchased, in the interest of the family, by Dr. John Carlyle, and left by him at Scotsbrig.[2] When Carlyle read it in 1842, the estate of Craigenputtock had just become his property in consequence of the death of his mother-in-law. He was not ambitious about titles then, no more than he was in 1874, when he declined Disraeli's offer of the Grand Cross of the Bath, but the fact that, in his person, a descendant of the old clan Carlyle had come back to the land in Dumfriesshire must, at that moment, have had a piquant interest for him.

[1] Froude—*Life in London*, Vol. II, p. 251.

[2] The book is now (1903) the property of Carlyle's grand-nephew, Mr. John Aitken Carlyle, tenant of Craigenputtock.

Carlyle, of course, does not appear in the *Collection;* in 1822, he had not emerged into fame.

One Gracie, a professional genealogist, or maker of Family Trees, who flourished at Dumfries about the middle of the last century, evidently got a Family Tree for the Carlyles out of the *Collection.* Carlyle, in Gracie's hands, was traced back to the Lords Carlyle of Torthorwald, the founders of the clan. Inadvertently, however, he reached an ultimate on the march through the dim and distant past by referring the line of descent to a certain Carlyle who had two daughters and no sons! So much for the Family Tree. Other attempts have been equally unprofitable.

There can be no doubt, however, that the Annandale Carlyles were a clan sprung from the ancient feudal dynasty of Torthorwald. They came originally from the South, getting the name probably from the Border City of Carlisle, and crossing by the West March. The Carlyles held lands in Annandale, under Bruce, towards the close of the twelfth century. One of them married the sister of Robert the Bruce, and was brother-in-law to the hero of Bannockburn, while his offspring belonged to the Royal Family at the close of Scotland's War of Independence in the fourteenth century. William Karlo (Carlyle), the King's sister's son, obtained a charter from Bruce, his uncle, of the lands of Colyn (Collin) and Roucan, in the parish of Torthorwald. At the Battle of Neville's Cross, near Durham, in 1346, where the Scots were led by David II. in person, and suffered defeat, Thomas Carlyle of Torthorwald was slain in the act of gallantly defending the King. After David II. was released from his long captivity and restored to the Throne, he signed a charter under date of 18th October, 1362, by which the lands of Collin and Roucan, formerly granted by Bruce to William de Carlyle, were transferred to the widow of Thomas Carlyle of Torthorwald, who fell at Neville's Cross. This widow subsequently married one Robert Corrie.

The Carlyles continued in Torthorwald. At the Battle of Arkinholm (Langholm in Eskdale) in 1455, which accomplished the final overthrow of the then Douglas despotism, the men of Dumfriesshire were led by Maxwell, Johnstone, Scott, and *Carlyle.* This same

Carlyle is the first Lord of Torthorwald of whom local history furnishes any distinct trace. In 1433, twenty-two years before the fierce fight at Langholm, this Lord Carlyle presented a bell to the Parish Church of Dumfries, bearing this inscription: — "Guilielmus de Carleil, Dom. de Torthorwald, me sicut fecit fiere in honorem Sancti Michaelis. Ann. Dom. MCCCCXXXIII. — William de Carlyle, Lord of Torthorwald, caused me to be made in honour of St. Michael. The year of our Lord, 1433." This old bell, *minus* the tongue but still capable of giving forth far-travelling sounds, is preserved in the little museum of local antiquities at the Observatory, Dumfries.

A LINK BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT.

"A large bell was dug up at Dumfries not long ago, of which I suppose Robert Carlyle has heard. There is also some notice of Carlyle in Murray's *Genealogy of Bruce;* but I am afraid it is a bad concern,—this history."—*Carlyle* to his Father, 1822.

At the Battle of Dryfe Sands in 1593, when the Johnstones almost annihilated their rivals of the clan Maxwell by an onslaught of "Lockerbie licks," the Carlyles fought on the side of the victorious Johnstones. With the clan Carlyle in Annandale, as with the rest of the world, in the long, obscure interval between the Battle of Dryfe Sands and the year 1745, "many," as the old ballad has it, "were the ups and downs of this life, when the dice-box of fate turned tapsalteerie." About the middle of the eighteenth century, among others, the clan was represented at one end of the social scale by Carlyle's grandfather, "Old Tom Carlyle of Brownknowe," and at the other end by the laird of Bridekirk and the Rev. Alexander Carlyle of Inveresk, whom Sir Walter Scott knew as "Jupiter Carlyle," the king among gods and men in his Edinburgh circle.

REV. DR. ALEXANDER CARLYLE (MINISTER OF INVERESK).
"Jupiter" Carlyle.

Carlyle relates in the sketch of his father in *Reminiscences* that his grandfather wasted his time much in assisting at the hunt in the interest of the then laird of Bridekirk—an estate on the road between Ecclefechan and Annan, now part of the lands of Mount Annan—"partly in the character of kinsman, partly of attendant and henchman": also, that this paternal grandfather journeyed across to Dumfries, in 1745, by request of the lady of Bridekirk, to look after his kinsman, the laird, who, being a Whig of note in the country, had been made a prisoner by the followers of Prince Charles, then retreating from Derby. "Old Tom of Brownknowe," at the nadir of fortune, was thus recognised for a kinsman of the laird of Bridekirk.

"Jupiter" Carlyle describes, with charming *naïveté*, an excursion which he made into Annandale, in company with his father, in the year 1733.[1] "Among the places we visited," "Jupiter" writes, "was Bridekirk, the seat of the eldest cadet of Lord Carlyle's family, of which my father was descended. I saw, likewise, a small pendicle of the estate which had been assigned as the portion of his grandfather, and which he himself had tried to recover by a lawsuit, but was defeated for want of a principal paper." He did not see the laird, who was from home, but was received with bounteous hospitality by the lady, "a very large and powerful virago," who had a reputation for her ability to empty a large bottle of brandy at a sitting.

"Jupiter" Carlyle and the family of the Carlyles of Bridekirk were thus descended from the Torthorwald stock. Since, then, in those years, about 1733 to 1745, Thomas Carlyle's grandfather was recognised as a kinsman of the laird of Bridekirk, the descent in common of "Jupiter" and Thomas Carlyle from the Lords Carlyle of Torthorwald receives singular confirmation from this early passage in "Jupiter's" *Autobiography*. It is at the best but a view of things remote, obtained in the dusky sideways of history, yet of historical value so far as it goes.

Carlyle himself discovered the sky-line, on the side of his ancestry, in the tradition that his "humble forefathers dwelt long as

[1] *Autobiography*, p. 23.

farmers at Burrens (formerly "Burrance," now usually "Birrens"), the old Roman station in Middlebie. This Birrens, the winter camp of the Romans, was on the banks of Middlebie burn, in a hollow on the hillside, where now the road passes leading from Kirtlebridge Station to the old village of Middlebie, behind which stands the farm of Scotsbrig. One of his ancestors was unjustly hanged there by "the angry Cumbrians," whose cattle had been stolen and disappeared at Birrens. His widow was greatly pitied, and received, by way of compensation, the small farm of Birrens in perpetual gift. About 1720, however, when this bit of land was owned and occupied by Carlyle's great-grandfather, the title of the Carlyles to it was disputed by a certain Duke of Queensberry, with eviction for result. The little farm is absorbed now by a larger one, nor can anything more than the probable site of this ancestral cottage be traced. Carlyle's "remotest look into the past" was bounded by the Birrens tradition; "and itself but a cloudy half or whole hallucination; farther on there is not even an hallucination."

"Our humble foretathers dwelt long as farmers at Birrens, the old Roman Station in Middlebie."—*Carlyle.*

Carlyle had the blood of the old aristocracy of the Western Border in him, mixed with the blood of the Scottish peasantry. Leigh Hunt affirmed that Carlyle had the most lovely eyes he had ever seen, and he had met the greatest men of a great age in all Europe; and Froude has wisely noted Carlyle's shapely hands as the sign of pedigree. Carlyle was equally at home smoking his pipe at the fireside with his mother in the rough life of an Annandale farm, and in the aristocratic circle of which he came to form a part

at Bath House, the Grange, and Addiscombe, as the friend for the sake of his genius, his achievement, his personal worth, of Lord and Lady Ashburton.

In the chapter on "Genesis" in *Sartor Resartus*, he writes with an indirect allusion to his own descent:[1]—"Unhappily, indeed, he seems to be of quite obscure extraction; uncertain, we might almost say, whether of any: so that this Genesis of his can properly be nothing but an Exodus (or transit out of Invisibility into Visibility); whereof the preliminary portion is nowhere forthcoming." When writing of Scott, however, as "intrinsically very much the old fighting Borderer of prior centuries," he was unconsciously describing his own case. From the side of the old fighting Borderers, Carlyle had received his temperamental confidence in might as right always in the end, with the emphasis thickened on the "might." In common with Frederick the Great, his latest hero,[2] "instinctively he believed, no man more firmly, that Right alone has ultimately any strength in this world: ultimately, yes." This strength of Right in him derived from the stock of the Lords Carlyle of Torthorwald, from "the old fighting Borderers" became, in literature, as "the strength of ten."

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II, Chap. I.

[2] *The History of Friedrich II.*, Vol. VI, p. 687.

# CHAPTER IV

## Carlyle's Ancestors

WITHIN the sky-line of descent, on the family tree which may be constructed on the lines of ascertained fact, much can be known concerning Carlyle's immediate ancestors. Carlyle has assisted his biographers here by the remarkable sketch of his father published in *Reminiscences.*

The modern parish of Middlebie covers what, two centuries ago, formed the area of the three parishes of Middlebie, Carruthers, and Pennersaughs, just as the conterminous parish of Hoddom has absorbed the three parishes, in old days, of Hoddam, Luce, and Ecclefechan. Each parish had its church and its kirkyard. Consequently no feature of the landscape around Ecclefechan is more striking than the large number of kirkyards about, some of them with not a stone left of the kirk in which the dead worshipped, whose names are remembered on the mass of gravestones in each little "God's Acre." In the kirkyard of Pennersaughs, sitting among trees close to the great north road, between Kirtlebridge Station and the village of Ecclefechan, a superior raised, horizontal stone, the work of James Carlyle when a stonemason, covers the graves of Carlyle's ancestors on the paternal side. The name on this stone, which concerns the present stage of our narrative, is that of "John Carlyle, who died in Burrance (now Birrens), March the 11th, 1727, aged 40 years." This "John Carlyle" was Carlyle's great-grandfather. He had not long survived the spoliation of his ancestral property by the Duke of Queensberry. His widow, Carlyle's great-grandmother, evidently removed, soon after her husband's early death, to the village

of Middlebie, which in those days was a thriving little community, consisting of many rows of thatched cottages that have now entirely disappeared. She had two sons—Thomas the elder, and Francis, or Frank, the younger. What became of the widow, or whether she, too, was buried in the family grave in Pennersaughs kirkyard, I cannot discover. She must have been a thrifty widow, for she had both her boys put to trades, Tom becoming a carpenter, and Frank a shoemaker.

Tom Carlyle, grandfather, married one Mary Gillespie, a native of Dryfesdale, and soon forsook the carpenter's bench for the more congenial occupation of farming. He was tenant in succession of two farms—Brownknowe (now Craiglands), a small holding in a hollow on the hillside behind Ecclefechan; and Sibbaldie Side in the Lockerbie district. His second farm was of short duration, hardly counted in local tradition, and he was always known as "Old Tom of Brownknowe."

Four sons and two daughters were born to Tom Carlyle and Mary Gillespie on their small, lean farm. Little is related regarding this grandmother, who died in Ecclefechan in 1797, at the ripe age of 70, when Carlyle was an infant of two years. All the known circumstances of her life point to her as quite a superior wife and mother, probably one of the too great multitude of "nameless martyrs" in the unwritten history of the Scottish peasantry, whose sons and grandsons reap in joy what valour they sowed in tears.

Concerning the grandfather ("Old Tom of Brownknowe"), and the grand-uncle, Frank, Carlyle had collected much valuable and romantic information. "Old Tom" apparently possessed some of the traits of his famous grandson. He was not an industrious man, and left to his wife the merit of handing down the Carlylean faculty for work. He was outwardly, and formally, an honest man. He got together the money needed to pay his small rent for the bit of a croft he held, then amused himself, and gave his wife to slavery, indoors and outside, half-starved his children, fed them at best on oatmeal, with a stray potato for a luxury at Hallowe'en! He had his carpenter's work always for "a stand-by," and, although Carlyle

was but a boy of eleven when he died in 1806, he had often assisted "Old Tom" to grind his tools. "Old Tom" did not drink: he was proud, discontented, poor: he possessed the Borderer's fiery temper, and was celebrated in Annandale for his sarcastic tongue, and for a certain skill at "Lockerbie licks" on occasion. Carlyle relates how he swam the river Annan at the Annan bridge on horseback, carrying a sack of barley and his son James, Carlyle's father, on the horse, and this at a dangerous part of the stream, rather than pay the toll-money, which he reckoned some sort of an unjust exaction. The toll was only three-halfpence! "He was a fiery man," says Carlyle, "irascible, indomitable, of the toughness and springiness of steel." This grandfather had the will in him to live high, to cultivate piety, but his Border temper was too much for his reserve of volition. Certain imperious stirrings of the love of literature were in him, for he was fond to read *Anson's Voyages* and the *Arabian Nights*. "Old Tom" died in poverty in the home of Carlyle's father in Ecclefechan. He was a typical Annandale Borderer of the eighteenth century, passionately fond of hunting, fighting, arguing, lacerating his neighbours with his quaintly satiric tongue. For better or worse, Carlyle had a good deal of "Old Tom of Brownknowe" in his heredity.

"Grand-uncle Francis" was also a person of curious individuality. He had followed his craft of shoemaker as far south as Bristol, where he got into trouble through drink, and enlisted on board a man-of-war. Frank Carlyle afterwards attained to promotion and honour in the Navy, earning renown for valour in standing by the captain of his ship in a mutiny and quelling it. He had command latterly of a revenue ship in the Solway. "Grand-uncle Francis," who was apparently a bachelor, retired to his native village of Middlebie on pension, and was known locally as "the Captain of Middlebie." There was a quarrel between him and "Old Tom," but the two old men were reconciled to each other on the verge of the grave.

The four sons of "Old Tom of Brownknowe"—John, James, Frank and Tom—experienced much hardship in childhood and

youth. They were compelled to "poach" rabbits and hares for their food, and to hire themselves out at weeding, or herding cattle, in order to get money for clothes. Poverty and suffering robbed the chase of its attractions, and the better instincts of "Old Tom's" boys got a chance of self-assertion. About the year 1773, a certain mason from Peebles, called William Brown, arrived in the Ecclefechan district, lodged with "Old Tom," married a grand-daughter, and taught the four brothers the mason trade. In course of the apprenticeship, work grew scarce for Brown in Annandale, and he crossed the country to Auldgirth bridge, which was then a-building, James Carlyle accompanying him. Of the four brothers, John died in 1801, at the early age of 47, and the three others established themselves as partners in the trade of stonemasons in Ecclefechan, Carlyle's father being principal partner in the small commercial enterprise.

Business prospered on a local and severely limited scale in the hands of the three brothers Carlyle. They were honest tradesmen, and evidently thorough work was more important to them than swollen profits. The "arch house" in Ecclefechan, which they built, where they resided together, is itself evidence to this day that they put the same veracity into their masonry which Carlyle took with him to his literary work. Other houses in the district, notably the farm-house of Hitchell, Cummertrees, still survive to demonstrate that no "scamped" work passed from the hands of James Carlyle. The cohesion of the family was perfect. In the three stonemasons, the old Border passion for fighting, hunting, and adventure had subsided, and by valorous application to the mason trade, a new family tradition was created. They were Borderers tamed by religion, elevated through the expulsive power of a new affection. Yet they were noted for their hard strikings, with tongue and fists at times, as well as with the stonemason's hammer, and were identified locally as "the three striking masons." Tom, the youngest brother, died in 1816, at Mainhill, the little farm to which James Carlyle had by that time removed. Frank died five years later in Ecclefechan. Carlyle "lovingly admired" his uncle Tom, for he had a Washingtonian reputation for never having told any lies.

This uncle died at 40, old at that evidently, for Carlyle describes him as "a true old-Roman soul." His death happened when Carlyle was at Mainhill in the interval between leaving his assistant-mastership in the Annan Academy and beginning work at Kirkcaldy; "the first death," he remarks, "I had ever understood and laid with its whole emphasis to heart." Uncle Frank had superior tastes and a cheerful mind. All three brothers were greatly esteemed in their own circle, and by the few strangers admitted to their confidence, but viewed by people at a distance "as something dangerous to meddle with, as something not to be meddled with."

James Carlyle was "Old Tom's" second son. He survived the rest of the family, and died in 1832, when Carlyle was spending the period of six months in London in the middle of his exile at Craigenputtock, at the age of 75. He was the strongest brother in the family, the architect of the family fortunes. Carlyle's beautiful sketch of his father in *Reminiscences* may be somewhat overdrawn, yet there can be no doubt that James Carlyle was a peasant hero; none that the father sat to his son for the glowing portraiture of the "peasant saint," which his filial reverence drew when he came to write *Sartor Resartus* at Craigenputtock[1]:—"Unspeakably touching is it, however, when I find both dignities united; and he that must toil outwardly for the lowest of man's wants, is also toiling inwardly for the highest. Sublimer in this world know I nothing than a peasant saint."

James Carlyle was twice married. His first wife was Janet Carlyle, his kinswoman, whom he married in 1791, at the mature age of 33, when his trade as stonemason was established. This Janet Carlyle died within a year of her marriage, leaving one son, Carlyle's half-brother, named John Carlyle, who migrated first to Cockermouth, and subsequently emigrated to Canada, where he prospered, his son becoming a distinguished scholar and educationist in the colony. In 1795, James Carlyle was married for the second time to Margaret Aitken, a native of Whitestanes, in the parish of Kirkmahoe, whose brother, John Aitken, was a stonemason in

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. III, Chap. IV, *Helotage*.

Dumfries, father of James Aitken, who married his cousin, Carlyle's sister Jean, whose daughter Mary was Carlyle's amanuensis and companion, at Chelsea, in his last years. Margaret Aitken was born in 1771, and was younger than her husband by thirteen years. She was scarcely twenty-five years older than her "Tom"—"a woman to me," Carlyle wrote, "of the fairest descent—that of the pious, the just and the wise."

In 1815, when Carlyle at the age of twenty was teaching mathematics in the Annan Academy, James Carlyle, who was then an old man of fifty-seven, invested the money he had saved in Ecclefechan in stocking the little farm of Mainhill, and removed there with his family. Nine children were born to them in the "arch house," Ecclefechan. The first Janet—their third child—died in infancy; so that when they commenced farming at Mainhill, under a lease from the proprietor, General Sharpe, of Hoddom Castle, there were eight children around them, the youngest being a baby girl of two years. From Mainhill, James Carlyle removed to the larger farm of Scotsbrig in 1826, six years prior to his death in 1832, where Margaret Aitken survived him until 1853. Here is an authentic list of James Carlyle's family:—

Thomas, born 4th December, 1795; died 5th February, 1881.
Alexander, born 4th August, 1797; died in Canada, 30th March, 1876.
Janet, born 2nd September, 1799; died 8th February, 1801.
John Aitken (Doctor John), born 7th July, 1801; died at Dumfries, 15th September, 1879.
Margaret, born 20th September, 1803; died 22nd June, 1830.
James, born 12th November, 1805; died at Pingle Farm, Canonbie, 5th May, 1890.
Mary, born 2nd February, 1808; died at The Gill, Annan, 6th April, 1888.
Jean, born 2nd September, 1810; died at Dumfries, 27th July, 1888.
Janet, born 18th July, 1813; died in Canada in 1898.

There was a singularly close resemblance between the ancestry of Burns and the ancestry of Carlyle, albeit Carlyle was of Border descent, whereas Burns came, on the paternal side, from the Highland Celtic stock. In common with Burns, Carlyle was born into the home of a thrifty Scottish peasant. What Burns wrote of his birth, in the *Letter to Moore*, Carlyle might pertinently have quoted of his own ancestors :—"Stubborn, ungainly integrity, and headlong, ungovernable irascibility, are disqualifying circumstances; consequently I was born a very poor man's son." No son can be explained, or accounted for, by being referred back exclusively to his parents. The individual, if I may borrow a metaphor from the wit of Wendell Holmes, is rather an omnibus carrying, for passengers, the transmitted remnants of many people than a single-horse carriage conveying but two. It is easy, nevertheless, to trace in Carlyle his mother's inexhaustible sympathy, her feeling for the ideal, her passion for goodness, as well as his father's dread of debt, industry, tenacity of purpose, personal decision, and controlling reverence, while the irascibility, the "sulphurous humour," that darkened all his days, spoiled much of his criticism of contemporaries, and inflicted many a passing sorrow upon the fair heart of Jane Welsh, came to him out of the old moss-hags and heather braes of the Western Marches, where, through the centuries, the Carlyles were fighters and cattle-raiders. The consecutive chapters in *Sartor Resartus*, entitled "Genesis," "Idyllic," and "Pedagogy," afford valuable side-lights of autobiography. "Andreas Futteral" is grandfather Tom, grand-uncle Frank, the sailor, and James Carlyle, composed into a picture of the whole, which is a portrait of none of them. In "Gretchen," Carlyle's mother, most beautiful of peasant women in literature, is clearly portrayed. "My Kind Mother,"[1] he there wrote, "for as such I must ever love the good Gretchen, did me one altogether invaluable service: she taught me, less indeed by word than by act and daily reverent look and habitude, her own simple version of the Christian Faith." In the eighteenth century, when James Carlyle and Margaret Aitken were young, "Annandale had long been a lawless Border country. The

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II, Chap. II, *Idyllic*.

people had ceased from foray riding, but not from its effects. The 'gallant man' of those districts was still a wild, natural, almost animal man."[1] This "almost animal man," in the Carlyle family, was transfigured by religion, which passed to the Carlyles through the rude medium of the earliest phases of Burgher Dissent, with Carlyle's inimitable didactic writings for result to English literature and to mankind.

[1] *Reminiscences*, Vol. I. p. 51.

THE DOCK PARK, DUMFRIES.
As improved since the time when Carlyle took his daily walks there, accompanied by Thomas Aird.

## CHAPTER V

# The Burgher Seceders of Ecclefechan

FROM the peasant's cottage in Annandale to the throne of literature in the Victorian age—this is the contrast between the small beginnings and the ultimate achievement of Thomas Carlyle which contact with the Carlyle country accentuates. Froude did not manufacture this unique contrast, although he painted his picture with clouds and darkness, with the symbols of poverty, hardship, pain too much in his purview, and by a curious twist of temperament forgot about the sunshine, the buoyant health, the joys that bubble up in homespun wit and humour, which a century ago as now abounded in Carlyle's Annandale.

"In the long run the opinion of the wise will be the opinion of the multitude: Carlyle was the noblest and truest man that I ever met in this world." These words were written by Froude in his *Oceana* in 1886, when his *Life* was bringing hurricanes of detraction about Carlyle's memory. Ten years later, Mr. John Morley, who unlike Froude is not a Carlylean either in politics or philosophy, described Carlyle as "the foremost figure in English literature." According to the late Professor John Nichol also, "Carlyle's literary career assigns to him the first place among the authors of his time" —and that time the middle of the last century!

Carlyle died, as he was born, a peasant, but a peasant glorified by cultured genius. Yet the contrast between his early environment, domestic and otherwise, in Annandale, and the regal position in the world of thought and letters to which he had attained when he

finished his *History of Frederick the Great* and received the Prussian Order of Merit, overwhelms the mind. It is as if one were gazing upon a sea of mystery. How came it that the descendant of the rude, wild Borderers—"the almost animal" men of Annandale—to whom might was right, not by any fine-spun philosophical calculation of ultimate results, but by assertion of pike and spear in battle, or of the fists and the blackthorn in domestic life, managed to evolve from within himself so transcendent a personality? No complete, no final answer can be given, but the intermediary of the religious impulse may do much to illumine the search. By the invasion of religion the old Border blood was purified, its original nobility restored and further ennobled.

In common with the more eastern quarters of the Border country of Scotland, Annandale had small part in the great upheavals of the religious impulse which happened in the period between the Reformation and the first half of the eighteenth century.

Early in the fifth century A.D., before the Romans had retired from their summer camp on Birrenswark, or their winter quarters near Middlebie village, when as yet the superstitious rites of the Druids prevailed among the Selgovæ, St. Ninian passed through Annandale and Nithsdale, and baptized there many converts to Christianity. The survival of such Celtic names as "Kirkpatrick" (*e.g.* in "Kirkpatrick-Juxta". . ."Kirkpatrick-Fleming" etc.) in the district testifies to the hold Roman Catholicism had upon Annandale throughout the Dark and Middle Ages, and even to a time on this side of the Reformation. The fighting Borderers, historically viewed, cared little about religion. Over them the awe of the supernatural had little power. They were the latest of all the Scottish mixed peoples to take up Protestantism in earnest. Carlyle overrated his personal indebtedness as an Annandale Borderer to John Knox.

It was altogether different in Nithsdale, which is replete with moving traditions of "the killing times" in the seventeenth century. James Renwick, Cameronian leader and martyr, was a native of the

picturesque hill village of Moniaive,[1] five miles distant from Craigenputtock across the moor. The Cameronians had their headquarters for Nithsdale at Quarrelwood in the parish of Kirkmahoe; and Carlyle's mother, who belonged to this part, must have been influenced in her youth there by the subduing fervours of Cameronian piety. There were little bands of Cameronians at Hightæ, near Lochmaben, and at Moffat; but Carlyle's Annandale has no Covenanting traditions.

On the side of religion, there was a distinct cleavage between the Scottish Westlands and the Borders until the middle of the eighteenth century. In 1795, Carlyle's birth-year, the Kirk (or denomination) of the Burgher Seceders had already then existed for fifty-eight years. For it was in the year 1737 that the "Associate Synod" was formed mainly by the brothers Ebenezer and Ralph Erskine. They meant to protest against the iniquity of the General Assembly's Act of 1732, an act which ignored the people—the parishioners proper—in the matter of appointing ministers to parishes, and gave plenary powers to the heritors and elders, in the event of the patron failing to make a presentation to the living within six months. "Associate Synod" was the original name for the Secession Kirk. Ten years after this protesting Synod was organised—in 1747—a split of the split took place. The Burgher Oath of 1745 compelled the burgesses to swear that they would "profess and allow the true religion" . . . "professed in this realm and authorised by the laws thereof." Thereupon a serious division arose in the Associate Synod. Did this oath imply approval of the Established Church as it was? Or was it no more than a confession of loyalty to the Protestantism of the country? In the Associate Synod, the majority was against the Burgess Oath (therefore, Anti-burghers); and the Synod resolved that any of its members

[1] Carlyle's "Minniyvie," which was the older orthography.

N.B.—In the present volume, precedence is given to the contemporary spelling of names in the Carlyle Country. Formerly, prior to the advent of universal School Boards and compulsory education, which includes spelling, in Scotland the difference between the vowels "a" and "o," or "a" and "e," or "i" and "u" was immaterial, and made nobody better or worse.

who took the oath should be excommunicated. The minority tolerant of the oath, was led by the Erskines, so that the founders were themselves excommunicated by the Kirk which they had antecedently created. Hence arose the two denominations of the "Burghers" and the "Anti-burghers." In the course of the eighteenth century the Burghers, who were always the most enlightened, most tolerant, most broad-minded among the Dissenters, got divided on the problem of the rights of civil compulsion in religion, and the duty of the magistrate to punish error. The result was a third split. The minority, who upheld the letter of the Solemn League and Covenant passed into the Original Burghers or Seceders ("Auld Lichts"), while the minority continued to call themselves the Associate Synod, or the Burgher Seceders ("New Lichts"). Burghers and Anti-Burghers—a few stern protesters remaining behind, of course—were re-united in 1820 under the denomination of the United Associate Synod of the Secession Church. In 1847, these Secessionists and the Relievers—another branch of Dissent dating from 1746 and of kindred origin—came into union as the United Presbyterians; and in 1899 the U. P.'s and the Frees, that is to say, the Disruptionists of 1843, became the United Free Church of Scotland, these two main streams of Scottish Dissent having by that date absorbed nearly all the remnants of the faithful that had continued as Cameronians, or Original Seceders, or "Auld Lichts," until about the third quarter of the last century.

The Associate Synod of 1737 was the strongest movement of Dissent in the eighteenth century. In his brilliant account of the religious and ecclesiastical life of that period,[1] Dr. Henry Grey Graham remarks that it was then "began a new phase of Scottish religious life, and the 'Seceders' became a distinct type of men in Scotland, adding a bitterness to religious spirit and an animation to the social life. Adherents followed the Secession leaders with keen ardour. When little meeting-houses and manses were to be built, they carted stones to rear the walls, carried on horseback the loads of heather or turf to thatch the roofs, and fuel, or 'elding,' of wood

[1] *Social Life of Scotland in the Eighteenth Century*, Vol. II, p. 106.

or peat, for the fires. To be present at the communions, where the few faithful ministers served, devotees would travel thirty or forty miles, and gather from thirty parishes around to hear the Word."

James Carlyle was the first, in the Carlyle family, to join the Dissenters at Ecclefechan, where from the earliest stage of the movement there had been one of the little "meeting-houses" of the Associate Synod. The Erskines had visited Annandale, made many converts, kindled a flame of enthusiasm for an earnest religion in this virgin border soil. There is a rock in a field adjoining the road between Ecclefechan and Locherbie which local tradition points out for "Erskine's pulpit"; and it is stated that this great original Dissenter baptized many children in the open air, at a small well in the same neighbourhood.

"My grandfather ('Old Tom of Brownknowe')," writes Carlyle in *Reminiscences*, "had a certain religiousness; but it could not be made dominant and paramount. His life lay in two." The society of huntsmen, poachers, "gaun bodies," and a certain old soldier called Sandy Macleod, author of the saying often quoted by Carlyle and Jane Welsh in their letters, that "we should be thankful we are not in Purgatory," who occupied a mud-cabin at Brownknowe, was most congenial to "Old Tom."

The religious impulse is quickened, in minds predisposed for it, by many a singular instrumentality, and the weak things of this world made, through its awakenings, to confound the mighty. There was an itinerant schoolmaster in Annandale who was also by trade a shoemaker. His name, as handed down by Carlyle, was "Old John Orr." This interesting pluralist flourished in James Carlyle's boyhood at Brownknowe. He was a man, according to Carlyle, "of boundless love and natural worth," but cursed with an appetite for drink which held him in melancholy bondage. This "Old John Orr" was James Carlyle's only schoolmaster. He was one of the earliest Burgher Seceders, and, after his intermittent lapses into drink, he was "torn with gnawing remorse." Through this strange medium the light of religion first entered the home at Brownknowe. William Brown, the stonemason from Peebles, brought a higher type

of religious character into "Old Tom's" family. By Brown, Carlyle's father was profoundly influenced towards the fixity of religious purpose, clothed in the outward forms of a Burgher Seceder, which, in Carlyle's judgment, constituted his father's crowning title to reverence and even more than local fame. James Carlyle had an uncle, also, on his mother's side, called "Old Robert Brand," who was "a rigorous religionist" in the communion of the Burghers worshipping in "the little heath-thatched house" in Ecclefechan. Robert Brand, whose grave may be seen in Hoddom kirkyard, had been a shepherd and drover, and was evidently a strong personality. It was mainly due to the influence of this old shepherd that James Carlyle joined the Burgher Seceders.

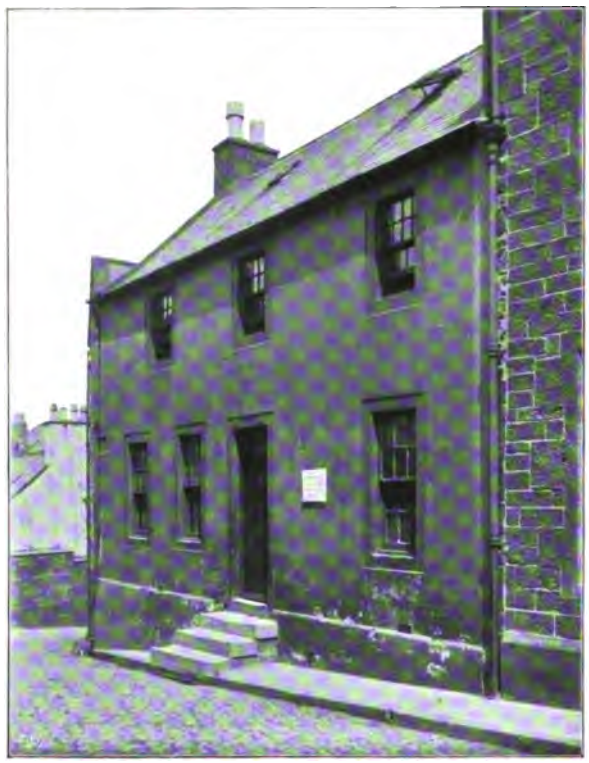
THE CARLYLE BIRTH-HOUSE.
"This umbrageous Man's-nest."—*Sartor Resartus.*

Among these humble, stern, earnest religionists of the Burgher phase of Dissent Thomas Carlyle was born. His father was a representative of the second generation of these devoted people in Ecclefechan—"strict," writes Carlyle, "not strictest species of Presbyterian Dissenter." The Cameronians, the Anti-burghers, "the Auld Lichts," were stricter than the Burghers. Indeed, the Burghers when James Carlyle joined the "meeting-house," in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, were the custodians of a liberal tradition. They had followed the Erskines, as against the Anti-burghers, in extending toleration to the Burgess Oath of 1745; and the Erskines favoured scholarship and letters. They had refused support to the movement, which should have given the magistrate

persecuting powers in the sphere of religious opinion; refused to make Protestant-Presbyterian conformity compulsory in Scotland. Severely dogmatic, tenaciously Conservative, on all points in creed or polity which might be declared essential by their leaders, they were, at the same time, disposed to admit the lights of common-sense. As a strict, a faithful, Burgher, James Carlyle disapproved of the "paraphrases" in public worship, on the ground that they were "man-made," whereas the Psalms—even the uncouth metrical version sung in "the meeting-house"—were Divinely inspired; but he was not slow to perceive the utility of the higher education; and one of his dearest aims in life was accomplished when "Tom" came to be recognised as a distinguished scholar. The Burghers believed that the Holy Ghost could speak by the lips of their ministers to all the better purpose, if the ministers, previously to entering upon duty in the pulpit, had received a liberal culture, knew their Latin, could read the New Testament fluently in the original Greek, and the Old Testament in the original Hebrew. The Divine *afflatus* was to be promoted, not hindered, by means of accurate grammar and superior diction. The Reverend John Johnstone, minister at Ecclefechan for the long period of fifty-two years, was evidently a most faithful representative of the Burgher tradition. He was James Carlyle's revered teacher until his death in 1812, when a successor came who made an abortive attempt to introduce "the paraphrases." Mr. Johnstone was a good Latinist, and both the old preacher himself and his son, when at home from college in vacation times, gave Carlyle valuable help with his Latin rudiments, and awoke in him the earliest stirrings of desire to possess wealth of language.

As a Burgher Seceder, James Carlyle was tolerant. He allowed "Tom" to have his way in the matter of abandoning his studies for the ministry; also, in the sphere of personal belief. To him personal well-doing was of infinitely greater moment than doctrinal agreement with himself. The Burghers, as a denomination, were the most reasonable of all the Scottish Dissenters in the eighteenth century, and set a great price upon scholarship, upon knowledge. Among

these humble men, indeed, of "the little, heath-thatched house" in Ecclefechan, the emancipation of the intellect from the tyranny of dogma had then already begun, which arrived at its final stage about the middle of the last century, when John Sterling and Maurice, Robertson of Brighton, Dean Stanley, Charles Kingsley, and Arthur Clough confessed themselves the disciples of Thomas Carlyle.



HOUSE IN WHICH BURNS DIED IN DUMFRIES.

"Much was to be done for Burns; many a poisoned arrow might have been warded from his bosom; many an entanglement in his path cut asunder by the hand of the powerful; and light and heat shed on him from high places would have made his humble atmosphere more genial; and the softest heart then breathing might have lived and died with some fewer pangs."—*Carlyle* in *Essay on Burns.*

## CHAPTER VI

# Towards the Pulpit of the Associate Burghers

THERE is a law of polarity that is constant in human nature. Man's economic and social conditions are determined by alternations of attraction and repulsion. From fall to rise, then from rise to fall again—so proceeds the life of families, and races as well.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, "the wild, natural, almost animal man" of the "lawless Border country" of Annandale had reached the *nadir* of social life. He could not have grown much worse, and yet survived. It was then—in 1758—that James Carlyle was born. His youth was contemporaneous with the swing of the pendulum, with a strong revulsion of feeling against the old animal life of fighting and the chase, and towards some better way. "Man's unhappiness," as Carlyle was fond to quote from one of his German writers, "comes of his greatness." Disgust with what is lowest, like pure flame kindled on a heap of ashes, is followed by aspiration, by passionate longing, for what is highest. This reaction created the "meeting-house" at Ecclefechan, and took the stonemason there as one of its most earnest and devoted adherents.

The depth and tenacity of Carlyle's early impressions of religion, as practised by the Burgher Seceders, are shown by the fond manner in which, in old age, he threw around them the splendours of his incomparable prose, in his sketch of Edward Irving. "A man,"[1] he there wrote, "who awoke to the belief that he actually had a soul to be saved or lost was apt to be found among the Dissenting people, and to have given up attendance on the Kirk"—

[1] *Reminiscences*, Vol. I, p. 81.

the Established Kirk. "It was ungenteel for him to attend the meeting-house, but he found it to be altogether salutary." Edward Irving's parents were not Seceders, but "Irving's young religion" was got among the Burghers at Ecclefechan. As was the case in those days in many other parishes in Scotland, there was a drunken minister in the pulpit of the parish kirk at Annam, whose conduct indirectly promoted scoffing and scepticism, and sent the people the way of Dissent. Adam Hope, who was headmaster of the Annan Academy when Irving was a pupil, and became English master in the reorganised Academy under one Bryce Downie, which Carlyle attended from 1806 to 1809, from his eleventh to his fourteenth year, was a sort of intellectual leader in the district; and Adam was a Burgher Seceder, walking six miles each way to John Johnstone's meeting-house at Ecclefechan on Sundays. The boy Irving accompanied Adam. Carlyle did not know his future friend then, but, in subsequent years, Irving and Carlyle often compared notes regarding the Sundays spent at the meeting-house, when they sat on the same benches, and received the same baptism of fervour from the venerable Johnstone. Self-denial came easy to those old Burghers. Carlyle could remember how he had seen a group of Scotch weavers, hanging up their plaids to dry during the service, who had walked from the neighbourhood of Carlisle in a rain-storm, a distance of fifteen miles each way, that they might worship in John Johnstone's meeting-house.

Infant baptism, mostly in church, was rigorously enforced by the Burgher Seceders. Although no record of the event seems to have been preserved, Carlyle must have been baptized by the saintly John Johnstone. The parish school stood then on the roadside between Ecclefechan and Hoddom Kirk. Tom Donaldson, the schoolmaster, pronounced his verdict upon James Carlyle's "Tom." He was "a lad o' pairts," and should be sent to the University, that is to say, put in training for the ministry. It then became the fond hope of James and Margaret Carlyle that Tom might some day "wag his pow in a pulpit"—the supreme profession, at that period at least, in the judgment of the Scottish peasantry.

Nothing, in anticipation, could have given the stonemason a keener satisfaction than that "Tom" should become an honoured minister in his own denomination of the Burgher Seceders.

And so, at the age of eleven (in 1806) young Carlyle was sent to the new Academy at Annan, lodged with Waugh, the model shoemaker, who was a distant relation of the family, and placed under the particular care of Adam Hope. In 1809, at the young age of fourteen, Carlyle matriculated as a student in arts at the Edinburgh University, with the view of preparing himself for the further special studies in Divinity required at the hands of intending licentiates by the Associate Synod. He completed the curriculum in arts in four sessions, each session extending from the end of October to the end of the following April, working at his books in Ecclefechan, or making himself useful to his father, in the summer half of the year. In the summer of 1814, at the age of nineteen, he was appointed Mathematical Master in the Annan Academy, at a salary of £70 *per annum*. He held this first appointment for rather more than two years. His name was then on the roll of students in Divinity in connection with the Burgher kirk. Qualified in arts at the University, he was permitted to pursue his studies in Divinity, not by attending classes in the Academy or Hall of his denomination, but by offering himself once a year, for four years or so, for examination in theology, Church History, Scriptural exegesis, etc., and by reading a specimen sermon to clerical examiners. Carlyle returned from Annan to Edinburgh twice for this purpose: first, in 1814, when he read a discourse in English: next, in 1815, when he read a sermon in Latin on Natural Religion —*Num detur religio naturalis?* He was evidently regarded in the light of a promising student, for, on both occasions, he received "bits[1] of compliments and flimsy approbation from comrades and Professors." He missed this ordeal in 1817, and abandoned the ministry for good in the following year. He had read Gibbon, had his doubts to fight, and had too profound a reverence for the memory of John Johnstone, and the saintly Burgher laymen his

[1] *Reminiscences*, Vol. I, p. 93.

boyhood had known in Ecclefechan, to reduce the pulpit to the level of a commercial enterprise in which doctrines might be repeated with impunity, and as part of the trade, after they had ceased to be true in the mind and conscience of the preacher.

Early in 1818 Carlyle wrote to his friend, Robert Mitchell, that his career in the theological line "had come to a close." He knew how strongly "the kind mother" desired him to enter the ministry; also, that it was his father's wish, who had made real sacrifices out of his frugal earnings as a stonemason in order to send him to the Annan Academy and the University of Edinburgh. His mother remonstrated, but his father was silently magnanimous, too shrewd in his hnmble way not to perceive the unwisdom of parental coercion in the matter. The incident, which apparently solved the practical problem, had its humorous aspect. "I remember yet," he wrote,[1] "being on the street in Argyll Square, Edinburgh, probably in 1817, and had come over from Kirkcaldy with some intent, the languidest possible, still to put down my name and fee"—(that is to say, to continue on the roll of Burgher Divinity students, and proceed to examination). "The official person, when I rung, was not at hand, and my instant feeling was, 'Very good, then, very good; let this be finis in the matter,' and it really was."

Carlyle renounced his purpose to enter the pulpit of the Burgher Dissenters only to occupy the wider pulpit of his incomparable didactic books. Like Coleridge, he was never done preaching, and to the close of his *magnum opus* of *Frederick*, he elevated history to the rank and dignity of the sermon in its best days. Through all his laborious years, from the summit of the mountain of influence and fame, whose slopes he had climbed with heroic resolution in thick darkness and in howling winds, Carlyle was, in respect of his passion for righteousness and his controlling reverence, essentially the Burgher Seceder. The close union between all that was best in his mind and life and the original Burgher inspiration proceeding from the lowly "meeting-house" in Ecclefechan, is strongly illustrated by the short distance which separates his grave from the old

[1] Froude's *Life*, Vol. I, p. 54.

building in which John Johnstone preached. On the side of things ethical and spiritual, lying back of all changing metaphysical formulas, Carlyle and the Burgher mind of the eighteenth century were " lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in death they are not divided."

Burns and Carlyle, in early life, were thrown among similar religious influences. The Ecclefechan Burghers were stern Calvinists of the type of old David Hope, who refused to omit family worship when told that the wind was driving his corn into the sea, answering —" Wind! wind canna get ae straw that has been appointed mine: sit down and let us worship God." They had an impregnable belief in a Special and Personal Providence, in the Divine Decrees. Burns's father was an Arminian, and magnified human Free Will. But the same atmosphere of home religion prevailed at Alloway, at Mount Oliphant, at Lochlea, as at Ecclefechan and Mainhill. In common with William Burns, James Carlyle was a servere Puritan, who had renounced all vanities, all frivolities, of the world. From both homes, there ascended daily the sounds of praise and prayer as "the priest-like father" conducted family worship, which, on the banks of the Doon and the banks of the Annan alike, was called "takin' the Book."

Carlyle's writings abound in passages which discover the direct influence upon him of the Burgher Seceders at Ecclefechan. There is the thrilling close of the chapter "Idyllic" in *Sartor Resartus*— "Beware, O Teufelsdröckh, of spiritual pride!" Reminiscent of the Annandale Seceders, also, men of fiery tempers, "gey ill to deal wi'," yet bowed regularly at the meeting-house before the Highest in sincere repentance and holiest aspiration, is the passage in *Past and Present*, in the chapter on *Aristocracies*, describing the "Church-apparatus" in the "hamlet where poor peasants congregate' —" it is beautiful:—even in its great obscuration and decadence, it is among the beautifulest, most touching objects one sees on the Earth." Carlyle, too, was an old man of seventy-one, the friend of the greatest, when his tenderest thought reverted upon the humble goodness of the Seceders who had given him reverence in his child-

hood, and he wrote of them thus[1]:—"Very venerable are those old Seceder clergy to me now when I look back upon them. Most of the chief figures among them in Irving's time and mine were hoary old men; men so like what one might call antique Evangelists in ruder vesture, and '*poor* scholars and gentlemen of Christ,' I have nowhere met with in monasteries or churches, among Protestant or Papal clergy in any country of the world."

The eighteenth century was not a great, not a productive, period in Carlyle's perspective of history. It was a barren epoch, "godless," the parent of mechanical philosophies which were but as stones, and not bread of life, to the famishing people. Carlyle exaggerated here; he was unfair to the eighteenth century. Yet, if we may take it for granted, with him, that the blight of materialism did then spread itself out upon the great highways of thought, by his own showing, there was, in the same period, much vision of spiritual realities accessible to the peasantry. The Wesleys were at work in the larger world without, and there were poor prophets teaching highest truths, living earnest lives, hidden in the glens of Annandale; and, among them, Carlyle at length arrived, commissioned by the Highest to set the feet of multitudes upon the rock of a new spiritual faith. "I do not quite know what to say about Carlyle," remarked Frederick W. Robertson in 1849. "Sure I am that his mind has had more influence on the thoughtful young men of the day than any other I could name."

[1] *Reminiscences*, Vol. I, p. 83.

## CHAPTER VII

# To Ecclefechan

THE road from Annan to Ecclefechan is incomparably the most expedient approach, from our Carlylean point of view, to the central heart of the Carlyle country. For, while Ecclefechan has its own railway communications, it should not be forgotten that half the last century had expired before railways arrived in Annandale: so that the earlier associations with Carlyle here fall in *pre*-railway times.

The distance, by the shortest road, between Annan and Ecclefechan is six miles, but few more interesting walks, or drives, can anywhere be found, especially for persons who may be acquainted more or less with the writings and the unique history of Thomas Carlyle. This road follows the course of the river from the eastern side. It was by this same road that at Whitsuntide, 1806, when he was but five months past his tenth birthday, boy Carlyle entered the town of Annan, accompanied by his father, the industrious stonemason, on his way to the Academy, and heard the steeple-clock strike eight, saw "the aproned or disaproned Burghers moving in to breakfast." It was here he was interested in "a little dog, in mad terror, rushing past; for some human imps had tied a tin kettle to its tail;" and found in the incident, twenty years later[1] "fit emblem of many a Conquering Hero to whom Fate (wedding Fantasy to sense, as it often elsewhere does) has malignantly appended a tin kettle of Ambition" . . . "fit emblem also of much that awaited myself,

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II, Chap. III.

in that mischievous Den; as in the World, whereof it was a portion and epitome!" This event of that Whitsuntide morning, now almost a century ago, meant to Carlyle the beginning of his evil days, but it signified also the inauguration of his career as a scholar.

As we ascend the easy hill in front, the surroundings are full of interest at every bend in the road. On the left hand, the wooded banks of the Annan, whence Scott took some of his scenes in *Red Gauntlet*, captivate the eye. Commerce is represented in the shape of a modern distillery situate quite near to the river. The mansion of Warmanbie is soon passed, and, some distance farther, the entrance to the mansion of Mount Annan, which is associated with Carlyle's earliest wage-earning work as a tutor. From "Mount Annan," in the autumn of 1814, two important letters were dated, which were written to Robert Mitchell, Carlyle's fellow-student at the University, who was then a tutor at the Ruthwell Manse. No sooner had Carlyle entered upon his duties as teacher of Mathematics in the Annan Academy than he was engaged to give private tuition at Mount Annan. "General Dirom,"[1] he writes to Mitchell, under date of October 18th, "came to reside at Mount Annan towards the end of June, and two of his boys, learning Greek, Latin, and Mathematics, were consigned to my care." When at Mount Annan, he was in grave dubiety concerning the profession of the ministry. His sermon for the Divinity Hall was not prospering; he hardly knew in what part of the Bible he should find the text which had been prescribed. "My sentiments on the Clerical profession," he continues to Mitchell, "are like yours, mostly of the unfavourable kind. Where would be the harm, should we both stop?" In another[2] letter to the same friend, written from Mount Annan six days later, which, although somewhat marred by the pedantries, and stilted sentences, of a student, shows a striking elevation of ambition and aim, he remarks thus upon their prudential bearings at that time:—"'Tis a bleak look-out, my dear Mit.—but, though the greasy *sons of pudding* may pass us by with all the *conscious dignity* of beings of a higher and

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. I, p. 13. [2] *Early Letters*, Vol. I, p. 24.

THE "NEW ROAD," ECCLEFECHAN.

Going North towards the Railway Station and Mainhill.—(See page 89).

a *fatter* order, yet, however humble be our lot, 'tis comfortable to think that—

"Justum et tenacem propositi virum
Non civium prava jubentium,
Non vultus instantis tyranni
Mente quatit solida. . .
Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinæ."

This somewhat hackneyed quotation from the opening stanza of the Third Ode of the Third Book of Horace—a perennial favourite in the Latin class-rooms of the Scottish Universities—indicates the singular moral loftiness which young Carlyle had brought with him from the University. He aspired then to be 'the man just and firm in his resolve, not to be shaken from his settled purpose by the corrupt fury of the mob commanding evil, or by the look of the threatening tyrant . . . who, even if the shattered heavens should fall upon him, the ruins would strike him undismayed.' Was not this the quality of manhood to which Thomas Carlyle attained?

Carlyle was fortunate in receiving, at Mount Annan, an introduction to the Rev. Dr. Henry Duncan, minister of the parish of Ruthwell. "Mr. Duncan left Mount Annan this morning," he writes to Mitchell in the same letter; "and having invited me to Ruthwell Manse, you may expect to see me in the course of a week or two some Saturday afternoon." The young "Mathematical Master" at the Academy was apparently staying at Mount Annan during those autumn months, teaching at Annan in the school hours, and giving private lessons in the evening to General Dirom's two boys.

At Landheads—the highest point in the road across the hill to Ecclefechan—a magnificent view is obtained, a view for extent and grandeur difficult to excel, and one never absent from Carlyle's imagination as he reflected upon his native dales. Looking back, the eye rests upon the dark-blue peaks of the Lake mountains beyond the vast sweep of the Solway, sparkling in the sunshine. In the flat below lies the town of Annan, made animate at the distance by the river as it widens towards the sea at Waterfoot. Away to the

West, Criffel, and the more remote Galloway Hills, can be seen. On all sides round, comfortable farms, costly and beautiful modern mansions, and the white cottages of the peasantry give human features to the landscape, which is thickly dotted all over with hospitable woods. In front the wooded hills of Brownmoor and Woodcockair fill the eye, together with the venerable Repentance Tower to the left, and on the distant sky-line, the tabular crest of Birrenswark, in shape resembling a huge pig's back against the horizon.

Carlyle was fondly familiar with every foot of this delightful road. When lodged in Annan, first as pupil, subsequently as teacher, he had walked regularly to and from his home in Ecclefechan. On his earlier visits to Annandale from London, before the railways came, he was accustomed to arrive by boat at Annan, where his brother "Alick" usually met him. They sometimes walked to Scotsbrig by way of Ecclefechan, sometimes drove in the farm "spring-cart." One of these walks on this road has passed into the Carlylean literature. In the summer of 1837, after Carlyle had finished his giant's task of the *History of the French Revolution*, his health temporarily gave way. He resolved to seek recuperation in his native Annandale; to consult the oracle in his "cave of Trophonius." He had then resided at Chelsea for three years—the period of his direst battle in an economic sense. His long, weary fight was at least half-won, for recognition was secure, and he saw his way to the frugal income of £150 *per annum*, as Diogenes in his tub, and in his chosen walks of literature.

Carlyle, a man in his prime at forty-two then, had come by sea from Liverpool, and been received by "Alick" at "the jetty" on the estuary of the Annan. When they reached Landheads, "Alick" had occasion to call at a cottage somewhere near, and Carlyle rested alone on a milestone, and gazed back upon the natural panorama of earth, sea, and sky with which from boyhood he had been familiar. He was in one of his dejected and melancholy moods, suffering from "the nerves." In the summer of 1836, he had remained in London, partly to keep down expenses

partly to get the *French Revolution* finished. He had been laborious, he had been faithful to the ideal set forth in the letters to Mitchell from Mount Annan, written whole twenty-eight years before. Yet his way was blocked. No gate would open at his touch. He was under suspicion's cruel ban in many influential quarters. His wife was sacrificing her own genius, her own chances of money and fame, in order to help him in the struggle, even suffering in her health under the load of anxiety which lifted so slowly; and poignant grief was mixed with savage indignation within him. And so, the contrast, at Landheads, between the beauty, grandeur, and apparent propitiousness of nature, on that bright midsummer's day, and the economic terrors in his personal lot so far, afflicted him cruelly; and he described the sensations of the moment in his *Journal* thus[1]:—"Tartarus itself and the pale kingdoms of Dis, could not have been more preternatural to me—most stern, gloomy, sad, grand yet terrible, yet steeped in woe."

Beyond Landheads, we look down, on the left, upon the village of Bridekirk, which spreads itself out in rows of clean, whitewashed cottages on the western bank of the river. There is no Bridekirk mansion existing thereabouts now, as was the case in the eighteenth century, and the lands of Bridekirk form a portion of the estate of Mount Annan. But it was here the Carlyle, laird of Bridekirk, lived, who, about 1745, was the then surviving representative of the Lords Carlyle of Torthorwald;[2] the kinsman of Thomas Carlyle's grandfather, and the kinsman, also, of the minister of Inveresk. Here, too, resided in those old days, my Lady Carlyle of Bridekirk, who, on the authority of the clergyman, her husband's relation, was capable of drinking an entire large bottle of brandy at a single sitting!

With Birrenswark throwing its height of 740 feet for a rampart against the horizon in front of us, we now cross the hillside, and descend into the wide dale, on the far side of which Ecclefechan stands "in trustful derangement among the wooded slopes;" and what in *Sartor* are described as "the kind beech-rows of Entepfuhl"

[1] Froude, *Life in London*, Vol. I, p. 109. [2] *Ante*, p. 24.

THE RIVER ANNAN AT BRIDEKIRK.

come in sight—that is to say, two umbrageous avenues of beech-trees leading to the village, the one on the Annan road, the other on the road from Hoddom Bridge. On the hillside, the road passes the entrance to the Manse of Hoddom. Here the Reverend James Yorstoun lived, who was minister of Hoddom parish in 1825, when Carlyle spent the year at Hoddom (Repentance) Hill. This Mr. Yorstoun was an intelligent Moderate, and one of Carlyle's few friends in the district, although there is no record of Carlyle ever having given him "a hearing" in the Hoddom kirk. On the occasion of Jane Welsh's first visit to the Carlyles at Hoddom Hill, one of the days was devoted to[1] "chess at Hoddam Manse between the fine old Clergyman, Mr. Yorstoun, and her (rivals at that game in Nithsdale, before now); this also was a pleasant little expedition for both of us, tho' in the chess part of it, I played spectator only."

Carlyle, who always liked clergymen, excepting the impudent or manifestly insincere class, had a profound respect for old Mr. Yorstoun, who spent his life in this quiet rural parish, and died in 1851 at the venerable age of 79, having lived long enough to witness his friend's triumph in literature. His grave, surrounded by a clumsy ivy-mantled wall, is located in the Hoddom kirkyard, immediately behind the church, where he is eloquently certificated to posterity as having "faithfully discharged his duties"; none the less faithfully doubtless for his game at chess with Jane Welsh, and his friendly and hospitable attitude towards Carlyle. In her Note-Book,[2] Mrs. Carlyle had stored away one of the quaint sayings of this Hoddom minister, to which Carlyle added an interpolation, on this wise:—

"I was going to have been scarce of fodder when by great good luck one of my cows died."—'James Yorstoun' (Revd. of Hoddam; excellent chess-player, excellent, simple, and ingenious man).

"Butcher: 'Is it an old cow?' Mr. Yorstoun: 'Yes, sir, the

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. I, p. 7.
[2] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. II, p. 114.

cow is old, *very* old.'" The pawky humour of this minister was frequently quoted by the Carlyles both in letters and conversation.

We are now within the parish of Hoddom. The older spelling, "Hoddam," which Carlyle invariably used, obtained as far back as 1769. In the charters of the twelfth century, the name is spelt "Hodholm," and "Hodolm"—Anglo-Saxon for "the head of the holm." How, why, or when the vowel "a" superseded "o," it is impossible to discover, unless the change be attributed to the popular fondness, in a country of fiery tempers, for the termination "dam"; but, for the last generation, the original "o" has returned and conquered. As a parish by itself, before the Reformation and previously to the union with Luce and Ecclefechan in 1609, the lands of "Hodolm" occupied exactly "the head of the holm," on the eastern banks of the Annan.

ANNAN ROAD, ECCLEFECHAN.
One of "the kind beech-rows of Entepfuhl."

From the road below the Manse, and[1] towards the bridge that crosses the Mein Water—the Meinfoot Bridge—where it approaches the river, the view of the hollow, and its surrounding slopes, is singularly beautiful. We are now in the environs of the "Entepfuhl" of *Sartor*, and seem to breathe the identical atmosphere of the chapter entitled *Idyllic*; to enter among the natural symbols of the

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. I, p. 56.

youth of the Carlylean world, where the hand of time has accomplished comparatively little change.

"The country," wrote Carlyle, "quiet, airy, wholesome, has real beauty of its kind." This was the mildest of dry encomium. For the majority of lovers of fresh country scenes would grow ejaculatory, and hazard the Carlylean censure for canting about the picturesque, when walking from the Mein Water to the village, through one of the beech avenues, past the kirkyard in which Carlyle was buried, and towards the "arch house" in which he was born.

When I last entered this remarkable old village, the bell of the Board School was calling the pupils back to their lessons from an interval of play. The contrast between the splendid, commodious school, erected by the Board under the Act of 1872, and what I was told of the old, low-roofed school-building, no longer to be seen, which stood near Hoddom church, when Carlyle was the stonemason's "lad o' pairts," and a pupil there, in the first six years of the last century, impressed my imagination; and I wondered if the improvement in the schooling had kept pace with the development of educational appliances in the interval of a century, since Tom Donaldson passed his verdict upon the boy Carlyle as one who should be sent to the University; since Sandy Beattie, the examiner, reported Carlyle, at the age of seven, "complete in English," and had him put to Latin, in case he should waste his time. What is evolved, let the appliances for the purpose be what they may, must have been antecedently involved. We must first catch our Carlyle, otherwise no school, good or indifferent, can educate him.

## CHAPTER VIII

# The Carlylean Mecca

"HE had educated me," wrote Carlyle, in the sketch of his father in the *Reminiscences*, "against much advice, I believe, and chiefly, if not solely, from his own noble faith. James Bell, one of our wise men, had told him, 'Educate a boy, and he grows up to despise his ignorant parents.' My father once told me this, and added, 'Thou hast not done so; God be thanked for it.'"

Approaching Ecclefechan from the side of the Annan road, we pass the entrance-gate of the rude kirkyard, and are reminded how Carlyle desired to be buried here. Dean Stanley offered a grave in Westminster Abbey, but the thought of a sacred reunion in death with his humble parents was dearer to Carlyle, at the zenith of his fame, than the proud contemplation of a tomb in the British Valhalla. The plain grave among his kindred, together with the unpretentious "arch house" round the corner, in which Carlyle was born, declares that "Diogenes Teufelsdröckh" was not a snob. He never despised his humble kinsfolk; he never sought to conceal the poverty associated with his immediate ancestry. As little did he boast of himself as a preternatural specimen of "the man who has risen"; for he had been carefully educated, and probably would have been no greater as scholar and writer of books, even although he had been the son of a Duke with Eton and Oxford behind him.

From the social point of view, his family could not assist him in the struggle to obtain a prudential footing in letters. Yet his parents were peasants of whom he had never the least cause to be ashamed; they were entirely respectable, and existed socially on the

upper side of the line below which, in a world of infinite and everlasting snobbery, reticence, or calculated concealment of origin, becomes the imperative of prudence on the part of children whose brains and culture throw them in the way of "better-to-do" people; for the latter are usually dependent upon snobbery for social success, and soon master the trick of fencing out the rival who is "not of good family." It was Carlyle's claim to reverence and love, indeed, that he never "despised his ignorant parents"; never was ashamed of his humble beginnings at Ecclefechan; but gilded his cradle years there with the splendours of his romantic prose-poetry in *Sartor Resartus*, his first great book.

Looking round in the centre of this grey old village, we are impressed with the accuracy of Carlyle's idealised picture of it in *Sartor*. He had an incomparable eye for actual features; it was with him as if the square and plumb-line of the stonemason had grown incorporate into his imagination. We are in the "Entepfuhl" of *Sartor*, changed somewhat, yet the same in the features selected by Carlyle for artistic treatment.

The difficult name "Ecclefechan" is usually explained as a compound of the terms "Ecclesia" and "Fechan"—the church of Saint Fechanus, an Irish saint who, according to tradition, visited Annandale in the seventh century, when the old church, or small abbey, the exact site of which cannot now be located, was founded. In a manuscript account of Dumfriesshire, preserved in the Advocate's Library at Edinburgh, it is called—"Ecclesia Fechanis," and the older spelling was "Eglisfechan." Doubt is cast by some authorities upon the historical reality of Saint Fechan, and a different etymology suggested, which derives "fechan" from the Celtic verb "feoch," meaning "to droop," "to decay," and makes Ecclefechan to mean "the church in the hollow." This saint, however, is none the worse even should he be but a mythical personage, and we see no cause to quarrel with the accepted etymology.

At the close of the eighteenth century, when "a little red-coloured infant" arrived in the cottage home of "Andreas Futteral" and "the good Gretchen" in "Entepfuhl," to be known in the domestic

circle as "the young Gneschen," and ultimately to the world as "Herr Diogenes Teufelsdröckh," Professor of "the new science of Things in General in the new University of Weissnichttwo," Ecclefechan consisted mainly of two long rows of small cottages, roofed with

ECCLEFECHAN.

"Here, assembling from all the our winds (at the Annual Cattle-fair), came the elements of an unspeakable hurly-burly."—*Carlyle* in *Sartor Resartus.*

thatch, situate on either side of the coach-road between London and Glasgow, sixteen miles north of Carlisle. There were no large houses then in the village; the most substantial building probably was the "arch house." The burn was open from end to end of the village—"the little Kuhbach gushing kindly by"—cleansed by generous rains and floods from the hills behind. Trees were numerous in the village. The space occupied by the open burn kept the street wide, and made ample room for "the elements of an unspeakable hurly-burly" at the fairs.

There is little change now in the exterior semblance of this

village which shares the fame of Carlyle. On the roofs of the cottages the earlier thatch has mostly been superseded by the colder slate. The burn is covered over for a considerable distance, although it still "gushes kindly by" in front of the "arch house." All the larger trees have disappeared, among them "the brave old Linden," under the shadow of which "the old men sat talking," while the child Carlyle greedily listened, "and the wearied labourers reclined and the unwearied children sported, and the young men and maidens often danced to flute-music." Commodious modern houses have multiplied both in the central street and in the lanes leading to right and left.

In 1755, the population of Ecclefechan was registered at 750: it has never been much above 800 at any subsequent period. Probably more people were there, dwelling in the warm thatched hovels of the eighteenth century, than is the case to-day. Local industries, which formerly kept the peasant's children at home, have disappeared—hand-loom-weaving, the manufacture of straw hats, and of linen and gingham. Before Annan and Lockerbie developed large weekly markets, before railway communication gave the advantage to these towns, Ecclefechan formed the chief market for the immediate district. The village looks now as if it had fallen asleep commercially, retired from business, or permitted business to retire from it; and an empty and silent linen factory, overlooking the street, suggests the causes of depopulation and decay of crafts, viz., the operation of the centripetal economic force, which withdraws industrialism from the villages, abolishes the small rural manufacturer, and makes the rush to the towns compulsory for the village youths and maidens.

In Carlyle's childhood a century ago, the rearing of pigs was a flourishing industry at Ecclefechan, and the village long enjoyed local renown as a pig market. The inimitable picture in *Sartor* of "the swineherd's horn" and "the many hungry happy quadrupeds, on all sides, starting in hot haste to join him for breakfast on the heath" was historically accurate. In the pre-railway times, the village had its contingent of carriers, who travelled regularly to all parts. Chief of these was the Edinburgh carrier, who was due

once a fortnight—a week being needed for the journey of over 70 miles each way—and conveyed victuals to Carlyle from "the kind mother" when he was a student at the University. Twice in the twenty-four hours the stage-coach passed through the village, changing horses at the inn: "weaving far cities like a monstrous shuttle into closer union."

BEDROOM IN BIRTH-HOUSE.

"Lifting the green veil, to see what invaluable it hid, they descried there, amid down and rich white wrappages, no Pitt Diamond or Hapsburg Regalia, but in the softest sleep, a little red-coloured Infant."
*Sartor Resartus.*

The "arch" cannot be missed, nor the "arch house," which was built by James Carlyle about 1791 as a home for his first wife, his kinswoman, Janet Carlyle. Although its structural plan is out-of-date, the house shows no signs of dilapidation; for James Carlyle's work was honest and endured; he had the "eye that winces at false work and loves the true." It is the property of Mr. Alexander Carlyle, eldest son of "brother Alick." Several houses were originally combined in the single building, in order to accommodate the different families of the brothers Carlyle, stonemasons, and the "arch" would form a convenient entrance to "the mason's yard" behind. The peace of the little community was safeguarded by giving each of "the striking masons" his own door.

The Carlyle "birth-house" is entered from the street by an inside stair. It consists of two apartments, the larger one to the right of the stair, the smaller a narrow, oblong bedroom to the left. Here were born the ten children of James Carlyle—ten, if we include the "John" who was Janet Carlyle's son, and the daughter of Margaret Aitken and James Carlyle that died in infancy. The puzzle is to

discover where they all slept, or what happened when sickness visited the family, or how they got through the long, dark winter nights thu "cabin'd, cribb'd, confin'd." It is not known authentically in which of the two apartments Carlyle was born, but the likelihood is that "the green silk basket" containing the "little, red-coloured infant" was carried from the smaller room across the head of the stair, and placed "visible and tangible on their little parlour-table." Here Carlyle returned to his home at week-ends when a pupil at the Annan Academy; here he spent the vacation half of the year during his period as student at the University from his fourteenth to his nineteenth year. Here James Carlyle, who never earned more than £100 in any one year when a stonemason, succeeded, with noble self-denial, in paying "Tom's" fees at the Academy and the University, and his frugal bill for lodgings as well; his reward to see "Tom" a scholar, to hear him arguing triumphantly with the "wise men" of Ecclefechan.

> "O small beginnings, ye are great and strong,
> Based on a faithful heart and weariless brain!"

In this home of James Carlyle, "old Tom of Brownknowe" died in 1806, at the venerable age of 84, the world having dealt harshly with him, but compensation being given in the nursing love of his son. Here the pathetic incident occurred, when "Old Thomas" was on his[1] death-bed, of the reconciliation between him and "grand-uncle Francis, the Captain of Middlebie," which profoundly impressed young Carlyle. The "Captain" could not walk: came in a cart: had to be lifted up the "steep straight stairs in a chair to the room of the dying man"—probably the smaller room: the two brothers being alone there for twenty minutes, evidently settling certain old scores on the brink of the grave.

And now to the "arch house" come pilgrims from all parts of the world, men and women whom Carlyle has influenced through his books. The names recorded here in the visitors' books, kept since Carlyle died in 1881, bear witness to the enduring nature of his

[1] *Reminiscences*, Vol. I, p. 34 (Longmans).

LARGER ROOM IN BIRTH-HOUSE.

"The Heavens smiled on their endeavour : thus has that same mysterious Individual ever since had a status for himself in this visible Universe, some modicum of victual and lodging and parade-ground."—*Carlyle* in *Sartor Resartus.*

cosmopolitan fame—Americans, Germans, Frenchmen, Spaniards, Hindoos, &c. The larger of the two rooms is occupied with interesting Carlylean relics. In one corner there is an excellent bust of Carlyle by Mrs. D. O. Hill, presented by Dr. Halliday Gunning, a native of Ruthwell, seven miles distant—"Grand Dignitary of the Empire of Brazil." The costly wreath hangs there which was sent by the German Emperor at the centenary of Carlyle's birth in 1895. The most significant memorial of Carlyle in this apartment, however, is the "Address" presented to him in 1875, on the attainment of his eightieth birthday, which was accompanied by the medallion head, the workmanship of Mr. J. E. Boehm. This "Address," the project of his old and faithful disciple, Professor Masson, was signed by 120 first-class names in contemporary Scottish literature, philosophy, science, and art. Under the "Address," those names are lithographed in alphabetical order. At the head of this majestic roll-call of eminence in the second half of the nineteenth century, stands the name of Thomas Aird, the poet, in whose weekly newspaper at Dumfries the *French Revolution* was welcomed to Scotland, and accepted in terms of unstinted laudation for proof that the peasantry of Annandale had given a new genius to the world. The "Address," which Carlyle cared little about, except as an agreeable expression of kindness and goodwill, is in its right place in the "birth-house." It accentuates the contrast between Carlyle's lowly beginnings and the unrivalled eminence to which he had attained long before his eightieth birthday. Moreover, it indicates in what an unique fashion, among geniuses, his life came full circle in his own day, passing, while he survived, through all the stages of ploughing, sowing, and cultivation, until he reaped in old age the full harvest of fame.

"We congratulate you," so reads this remarkable tribute, "and ourselves on the spacious fulness of years which has enabled you to sustain this rare dignity among mankind in all its possible splendour and completeness." He was assured that, in the judgment of those 120 eminent scholars, he had proved himself "a teacher whose genius and achievements have lent radiance to his time:"

ECCLEFECHAN—AT THE BIRTH-HOUSE.

"The little Kuhbach gushing kindly by."—*Sartor Resartus.*

one, also, who had realised in himself his own ideal of "the hero as man-of-letters."

The "arch house" is sacred to Carlyleans, because of the affectionate family life which existed there in the teens of the last century —until 1815—and helped Carlyle to lay the strong foundations of his scholarship and culture. No event was so important in that little house then as "Tom's" home-coming from the University. His father went out to meet him on the road. Carlyle was deeply affected on learning, in 1876, how his "brother Alick" had died in Canada, muttering in his last wandering moments—"Is Tom coming from Edinburgh the morn?" It was the voice of a rare brotherly devotion coming back to him from the scenes of his boyhood at the "arch house" . . . "across wide oceans and long decades of time."

There is a modern cottage in what was formerly the "mason's yard" and the garden behind the old home. Here stood "the orchard-wall" on the coping of which Gneschen sat at sunset, eating his supper of bread-crumbs boiled in milk, when[1] "those hues of gold and azure, that hush of world's expectation as day died, were still a Hebrew Speech for me; nevertheless I was looking at the fair illuminated Letters, and had an eye for their gilding."

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II, Chap. II.—*Idyllic.*

# CHAPTER IX

## Lingering in Ecclefechan

"WHAT can you say of Carlyle," Ruskin asked, "but that he was born in the clouds and struck by the lightning?" Not the whole man. While lingering near the "arch house" in Ecclefechan, we feel that Carlyle was born on *terra firma*, made of common clay of the best peasant quality. His feet were strongly planted in the soil of inheritance, among the prudences and practicalities, where diplomacy guided independence, "lord of the lion heart and eagle eye." What little business devolved upon Carlyle he invariably managed with perfect dignity and real success. He might have been a great Governor of a Crown Colony, a benevolent despot, Abbot Samson *redivivus*; and in an epoch of rebellion, he might have been a second Oliver Cromwell. Never was he in debt, and his domestic affairs at Chelsea, with his publishers, with "the honest lawyer in Dumfries," were conducted with a methodical gratitude and *savoir faire* worthy of a potential Governor of the Bank of England.

For the stonemason's child was father of the man. At this old "arch house," the foundations of his extraordinary attachment to his humble home, to his parents, were laid. He was twenty when the removal to the farm took place, earning £70 a year in Annan. Carlyle was the privileged member of the family, set apart for scholarship and the ministry, and there is no record of a single hard day's work ever done by him in the mason's yard or in the fields. He inherited the will to work from his parents. His industry was not less regular at Craigenputtock and Chelsea than his father's had been in Ecclefechan. He wrote books as his father built houses, less for profit than for the pride of "a good job," putting the honesty,

thoroughness, veracity into literature which James Carlyle had imported into his masonry.

This "arch house" nurtured young Carlyle. Here he discovered that, like all his Border ancestors, he had a hot temper; that dynamite of explosive irascibility was stored away in the subterranean passages in him. In a rage he threw his stool at his half-brother; broke it; came by his earliest intimation that the "me" was bounded by the "not-me"; that the earth was full of resistance offered by other wills to his own; and felt for the first time "the united pangs of loss and remorse," which never afterwards ceased at intervals to lacerate his heart. Here, too, he was introduced to the mystery of death when he saw his infant sister lying dead under a sheet on the bed; or when the sight of his uncle's face in death gave him "a new pang of horror."

Carlyle in boyhood rather admired and feared than loved his father, but his unique attachment to his mother began at the "arch house." She was sternly religious, yet good-natured, gifted with a sparkling wit, a mirthful creature by temperament; and if her piety might be deeper than her husband's, she "had also the more sport." "No man," wrote Carlyle, "of my day, or hardly any man, can have had better parents."

The Carlylean evangel of labour and hope came from the dedicated industry of the "arch house." Here was struck the key-note of *Past and Present*, which was not written until the economic plight of the country called for it in 1843, ten years after his father's death. The watchword—"Wir heissen euch hoffen!"—came from the stonemason and the "arch house" first, from Goethe next, and in the lyric form of art: so, too, Carlyle's fondness for Goethe's *Mason-Lodge*, his translation of which is more inspired than the original; verses never long absent from his tongue, recited at the close of his Rectorial "Address" at Edinburgh:—

"The Mason's ways are
A type of existence,
And his persistence
Is as the days are
Of men in this world," etc.

THE OLD MEETING-HOUSE.

"It is beautiful;—even in its great obscuration and decadence, it is among the beautifulest, most touching objects one sees on earth."—*Carlyle*—"*Past and Present.*"

Yet Ruskin was not wrong. Carlyle was "born in the clouds" of Calvinistic theology, and "struck by the lightning" of a revival of Puritanism in Annandale. On the opposite side of the wide roadway where "the little Kuhbach gushes kindly by," there is an opening among the cottages, which is called "the Blue-Bell Close." The old building, still occupied, on the lower side of this Close, was the original heath-thatched meeting-house of the Erskinites, or Burgher-Seceders—the communion to which James Carlyle belonged. This upper room, which could not have held more than 50 people, was entered by an outside stair. Notwithstanding its rudeness, the place is still sacred as the first religious home of the man who brought the Puritan revival of the eighteenth century to Annandale.

Before James Carlyle became a Seceder, the congregation had outgrown the capacity of the room in the Blue Bell Close, and migrated to a larger meeting-house. This historical building stands in a narrow lane towards the upper end of the village, and is now converted into a tenement of dwelling-houses; for the descendants of the Seceders worship in a handsome Gothic church close to the kirkyard, which was passed by the little procession at Carlyle's funeral in February, 1881. The old meeting-house, originally roofed with thatch, has the appearance of having been built piecemeal, or enlarged. Ultimately it had gallery accommodation, approached by an outside stair, and held 500 people. It was here the Reverend John Johnstone preached, first minister of the meeting-house from 1700 to 1812. Here the Carlyles worshipped. Here came intellectual Adam Hope all the way from Annan. Here the boy, Edward Irving, stealing away from the parental pew in the parish kirk at Annan, arrived in the company of certain strong theologians, as odd in look and manners as they were zealous in the Seceder cause, to have spiritual forces awakened in him by the voice of the saintly Johnstone which still pervade Christendom. Here Thomas Carlyle was instructed in "the three reverences" many years before he had heard the name of Goethe, or was aware of the existence of *Wilhelm Meister* among books.

In James Carlyle's time, there was larger clear space in front of

the meeting-house. Here, according to the Scottish custom since churches and Sabbath observance began, the Seceders of the village and district were wont to gather an hour or so before the hour for worship. They had no newspapers then, or only a small, dear sheet at intervals—one among many readers: and the news was got and discussed at the kirk before service. Themes great and little were then debated, from the latest scandal in the parish, or the competition for the next "tack" (lease) of the farms about, to:—

> "——thoughts more elevate, and reasoned high
> Of Providence, Foreknowledge, Will, and Faith—
> Fixed fate, free will, foreknowledge absolute—
> And found no end, in wandering mazes lost."

In a letter to "Tom," under date of New Year's Day, 1823, when "Tom" was detained in Edinburgh by the duties of the Buller tutorship, James Carlyle describes one of the debates at "the meeting-house door." The subject being discussed was the resurrection of the body. A weaver, named Robert Scott, had argued, as against some contrary theory supported by George MacIvin, the blacksmith, that the identical body would rise again. Carlyle's father, who was involved in the debate, with the keen, almost impudent, sarcastic humour of his race, remarked that he "thought a stinking clogg of a body like Robert Scott the weaver's would be very unfit to inherit those places." For the devout stonemason could "strike" with his tongue.

The churches owe their persistence largely to devout women, and this old meeting-house in Ecclefechan was very dear to Carlyle's mother. During one of his visits to Scotsbrig from Chelsea, he found "the kind mother" profoundly distressed because some "ruffians" in the village had broken fourteen panes of glass in the windows of the meeting-house. The larger windows in the venerable building are still composed of small square panes, and it was doubtless a barbarous amusement for the "ruffians" to break fourteen of them without quite destroying the window. On seeing the pious heart of the old mother wrung with sorrow and indignation at this piece of wickedness in Ecclefechan, Carlyle forgot all his heresies, all his

philosophy, and felt himself young again, and as if seated by his mother's side in the family pew in that rude Temple of the Highest.

The old meeting-house is interwoven with Carlyle's career. Its impressions, its sacred memories, saved Carlyle to reverence for all that he could find manifestly sincere in Christianity and Churchism, after he had ceased to derive any personal benefit from church-going. What he had witnessed and experienced at the meeting-house prevented him from deteriorating, even in his most Byronic period, into the vulgar iconoclast, preaching rationalism with savage irrationality; kept reverence strong in him, and stood there in the shadow of the hills at Ecclefechan for a constant object-lesson of the utility, in this world, of forms of faith which the culture of succeeding generations can but relegate, on the metaphysical side at least, to the limbo of outgrown error; helped him to retain clear vision of what Herbert Spencer affirms as the "soul of truth in things erroneous."

The "clouds" were about the meeting-house, and there, also, the "lightning," while the prudences and practicalities, the lesson of the inevitable compromise, were at the "arch house." It was here Carlyle's moral loftiness, his passion for the ideal, his withering scorn of flunkeyism, snobbery, and mean ambition, his savage wrath against shams, as well as his reverence and love, had their fontal source. If at the "arch house" he discovered[1] "a dark ring of care among the rainbow colours that glowed on *his* horizon," it was the impulse created, or stimulated, by the old meeting-house that caused a kind heavenly sun "to brighten the ring of Necessity" into "a ring of Duty," and to play round it "with beautiful prismatic diffractions." It was the sacred recollection of childhood in the family pew there which inspired the following sentence in the same chapter of *Sartor:* "The highest whom I knew on Earth I here saw bowed down, with awe unspeakable, before a Higher in Heaven: such things, especially in infancy, reach inwards to the very core of your being: mysteriously does a Holy of Holies build itself into visibility in the mysterious

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Bk. II, *Idyllic.*

deeps; and Reverence, the divinest in man, springs forth undying from its mean development of Fear."

No monument, no statue, of Carlyle, as yet, has been erected at Ecclefechan, or anywhere in his much-loved Annandale. In the window of one of the cottages in the village, the sign appears of the "Resartus Reading Room." This is all. A small badly-lighted apartment containing a few newspapers, a bagatelle board in a smaller room behind, and a neglected library above a rickety stair —this is the "Resartus Reading Room!" A complete edition of Carlyle's books, which the library at one time possessed, has now wholly "disappeared." I asked an obliging peasant in one of the lanes if he had read Thomas Carlyle's books. "No," he replied, "they're no easy to get haud o' hereabouts."

The prophet has been unhonoured, not dishonoured, hitherto in his own Mecca. Education spreads, in the School Board sense of the term, but Carlyle is not read by the peasantry. In Ayrshire, indeed, anywhere in Scotland, everybody sings *Bonnie Doon*, or recites *Tam o' Shanter*, or quotes epigrams from the prose *Letters* of Burns, but in Annandale no bookseller could afford to "stock" even the sixpenny edition of *Sartor*. "Let me make the songs of a people," remarked Fletcher of Saltoun, "and who will may make their laws." Carlyle was law-maker, not lyric poet. His exquisite lines on the dawning of "another blue day," his *Sower's Song*, his *Fortuna*, set to the deep refrain—"But a dastard has evil to boot"; his version of Luther's Psalm—the war-ode of the mental conflict, or his translation of Goethe's *Mason-Lodge*; are not universal in their appeal, nor is his gutteral bass music set to the popular romantic note. Carlyle's romance, his tragic experiences in wedlock, his almost broken heart in old age, proceeded not from the amativeness that sweeps reason from its throne in torrents of passion, but rather from the defect of uxorious appetite. He was too much the child of the "clouds," too much "struck by the lightning," ever to rival Burns in the hero-worship of the peasantry, or to serve them, as Burns serves them, for the perennial feeder of love's romantic dreams, for the magician of the tender passion.

Prejudice, moreover, prevents the peasantry of Annandale from sitting at the feet of their prophet. Carlyle has been too much of a "bogey man" to theological Scotland. Bigotry hints a fault and hesitates dislike. Was he sound in the faith? Did he go to the kirk? Was he not ill-tempered? Even in Annandale the shade of Carlyle has been shadowed by Froude, and he is but a poor specimen of the tribe of geniuses who was "hardly good to his wife!" In any case, his books are for professors, not for the people. "Corson says thou maun write plainer, Tom," remarked "the kind mother" to Carlyle, after his books had given him fame, "Corson canna comprehend thee, lad." "Tom" answered that he was wholly unequal to the task of writing down to Corson's comprehension.

The inevitable reaction, as sure as the return of the Solway tide, is already begun in Annandale. Lying gossip, the scandal of envious tongues, the sneer of local jealousy, the whispered disparagement of bigotry, are coming to be found out by a new generation more detached from the Carlyle family, better able to isolate Carlyle from his Annandale surroundings, and appreciate his greatness in the perspective of history, than were Carlyle's contemporaries, or the race of peasants that knew him by sight as he moved about Ecclefechan in his latter years, and, deservedly or otherwise, earned popular condemnation as "a gey thrawn auld body," for whose convenience even the cocks must cease to crow at sunrise. Scotland is strongly political—conservative in theology, and radical in politics. Some rabid Tories may denounce Carlyle for a Radical (*sic*), while some equally rabid Radicals sum him up as "a Tory of the deepest dye" (*sic*); but intelligent people, even among the peasantry, who have survived the measles of ignorant and small-minded partisanship, are coming round to the conviction that they can as little afford to neglect the writings of Carlyle as to ignore the Psalms of David, or the Books of the Prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah. "I spent a joyful week in Annandale," wrote Carlyle to Jane Welsh in the summer of 1823, "amidst scenes in themselves unattractive or repulsive, but hallowed in my thoughts by the rude but genuine worth and true affections of those who people

them." This old, quaint, favoured village of Ecclefechan, and all Annandale, before *Sartor Resartus* shall be a century old, will doubtless more fully reciprocate Carlyle's love, and count it their highest honour that, among them, he was "born in the clouds and struck by the lightning."

SHINNEL BRIDGE.

Between Templand and Craigenputtock.

"The water came brawling down, the voice of it like a lamentation among the winds, answering me as the voice of a brother wanderer and lamenter, wanderers like me through a certain portion of eternity and infinite space."—*Carlyle* in *Letter to Mrs. Carlyle* in 1842.

# CHAPTER X

## Around Carlyle's Grave

THE love of Annandale grew always the stronger in Carlyle as he came to live in the past, and to feed his imagination upon recollections of boyhood, throughout his prolonged natural senility. Westminster Abbey attracted him less for a last resting-place than the sacred tranquillity of the kirkyard in the village that had reared him. There "the weary Titan" might find grateful rest side by side with his parents. He terminated his long career where he began, thus linking together the two-roomed cottage (what the Scottish peasants call "the but and the ben") of an Annandale peasant with the throne of literature in the nineteenth century.

You cannot be in Ecclefechan and miss the churchyard. There is only the "yard," no church, for the kirk of the parish of Hoddom stands at the cross-roads, a good mile towards the woods of Woodcockair and the river Annan. Crossing from the old meeting-house into the Annan road, we come to the kirkyard gate in a trice. By stepping a few yards to the right among the long grass and gravestones, we reach the iron railing by which the grave of Thomas Carlyle is enclosed. The garden wall behind the "arch house" can be seen from the grave, so near are birth and death in the great story of Carlyle.

The churchyards in Scotland, as in England, in past times, were either around the kirk, or in the centre of the village. Sanitary science was unborn, and gave no trouble. The villagers had the sad symbols of inevitable death constantly before them, and the neglected condition of the graveyards hints that familiarity bred contempt.

Cemeteries, detached from kirk and village alike, are common nowadays, but Ecclefechan is in no hurry, loves her primitive ways, and while a single "lair" is available, it will be a coveted honour to anticipate burial in the same "God's Acre" as "the foremost figure in English literature."

AROUND MARGARET CARLYLE'S GRAVE.

"Oh, pious mother! kind, good, brave, and truthful soul as I have ever found . . . . from your grave in Ecclefechan kirkyard yonder, you bid your poor Tom trust in God, and that also he will try if he can understand and *do*."—*Carlyle* in *Journal*, 1853.

Its sacred dust apart, the old churchyard of Ecclefechan is a rude conglomerate of uncultivated nature and the artifice of custom and natural piety. The graves have seldom been kept: grass and weeds have full sway. The gardener's taste might destroy the charm of antiquity about it, inasmuch as new generations might then forget that the churchyard has been an appurtenance of the village from beyond 1609, the date at which the three parishes were united. The oldest gravestone here bears the date of 1621. Antiquity in fresh costume becomes modern. Gray's country churchyard could not have been more "neglected."

Inside the iron railing around the Carlyle plot there are three upright, plain gravestones. Here stood the original family grave of Carlyle's father, secured by him with the "arch house." He was establishing another Carlyle family, and evidently meant to possess a burial-place independently of the older grave of his ancestors in the Pennersaughs graveyard. This grave would be the conventional complement of the house. The earliest interment was that of the stonemason's first wife, Janet Carlyle, whose name is on the stone to the left. She died in 1792, and her long, fair hair, cut off in the

fever, lay concealed in a drawer in the house, an object of strange dread to the children. Later than this date, there were interments in the grave at Pennersaughs—James Carlyle's father in 1806, and his brothers—John in 1801, and Thomas in 1816.

The next name on this oldest of the three gravestones is that of the infant Janet, Margaret Aitken's child, who died in 1801. Then follows Carlyle's eldest sister, Margaret. She died of consumption at Dumfries, whence her brother's tender solicitude for her recovery had taken her in hope of benefit from superior medical attention, in 1830, when Carlyle was in his second year at Craigenputtock. He describes Margaret's last days and death, at the age of 27, with scrupulous exactitude and fulness of detail in a singularly pathetic letter to his brother, Dr. John Carlyle. The death of Margaret was the first break in the family; and the common sorrow, like foam upon a river in flood, told of the passionate deeps of cohesive family affection that had by this time discovered their existence in James Carlyle's household. He informs the absent brother how "the kind mother," at Margaret's death-bed, had[1] "begged her forgiveness if she had ever done her anything wrong." . . . "I saw her in the winding-sheet," wrote Carlyle, "beautiful in death, and kissed her pale brow, not without warm tears which I could not check." . . . "She sleeps in a pure grave, and our peasant maiden to us who knew her is more than a king's daughter." The person who can read this brother's letter to brother without moist eyes, or rise from it to call Carlyle "an unfeeling beast," must himself be more animal than man.

Margaret died at midsummer. Among the daughters of the family, she was what Carlyle was among the sons. Alluding to her death in his *Journal*, Carlyle wrote:—"That solstice night with its singing birds and sad thoughts, I shall never forget." Carlyle was in charge of the funeral arrangements. The body was first conveyed in a hearse from Dumfries to Scotsbrig, the farm gig with Carlyle and his sister "Jenny" in it, following behind, and Mrs. Carlyle (Jane Welsh) riding behind the gig. The funeral took place from Scotsbrig.

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 109.

"Our mother," wrote Carlyle, "behaved in what I call an heroic manner." The grave of Margaret is between that of the parents and Carlyle's grave.

The next death in the family was the father's, manifestly a brave man (*ein Tapferer*), who won some of the victories of peace that are "not less renowned than war." His personal life has passed into literature in the "Sketch" published in *Reminiscences*. He died in 1832, at the ripe age of 75, after, as stonemason and farmer in turn, as Christian husband and father, he had "builded better than he knew." His last illness was short, his death unexpected. At the time of his father's death, Carlyle and his wife were in apartments at 4, Ampton Street, London, in the middle of the visit of six months from Craigenputtock. He was short of money in that year. Poverty, and the time then needed to make the journey by stage-coach and steamer, rendered it inexpedient for him to attend the funeral, an absence which occasioned him poignant regret. He composed his turbulent emotions by writing the "Sketch" of "James Carlyle." The house at 4, Ampton Street is thus pathetically associated with the incident of the letter announcing his father's death, to which the brave words of "our mother" were attached in her own hand:—"It is God that has done it. Be still, my dear children. Your affectionate mother. God support us all"; also, with Edward Irving's visit about the hour of the funeral, and his prayer: "whose insane babble about his tongues and the like was for Carlyle like froth to the hungry and thirsty," and wrung from him the exclamation—"My father was a *Man*, and should be mourned for like a man."

Then follows on this old family gravestone the name of "Margaret Aitken Carlyle," the prototype of "the good Gretchen" in *Sartor*, one of the bravest women, one whose humble personality has emerged gloriously in the literary history of the last century. She survived her husband until the close of 1853, passing away at Scotsbrig at the age of 82, surrounded by her devoted children. Carlyle attended the funeral, muttering—"Farewell, farewell!" Two months afterwards he wrote in his *Journal*:—"Oh, pious mother! kind, good, brave, and truthful soul as I have ever found. . . from your

grave in Ecclefechan kirkyard yonder, you bid your poor Tom trust in God, and that also he will try if he can understand, and *do*."

The inscription here, from the conjunction "*And*," was composed by Carlyle—"gratefully reverent of such a father and such a mother." Although Carlyle's parents were devoted Christians from first to last, they placed no texts of Scripture, nor any pious laudations, upon the family gravestone. The detestation of cant, which through its violence almost became canting against cant in Carlyle, his precept of silence among the deep things of faith and conduct, his theory that "the Highest" could not be spoken of in words, were matter fundamentally of family inheritance, passing to Carlyle from his humble Annandale home.

On the right, as we remain in front of the little enclosure, is the gravestone of Carlyle's youngest brother, James Carlyle; and the more costly yet equally plain stone in the centre, with the name and dates of birth and death under the ancient crest of the Carlyles and the heraldic motto of the clan—"Humilitate"—(an innovation this which Carlyle would hardly have tolerated or approved)—marks Carlyle's grave. The memorial stone was erected by his legatees. Dr. John Carlyle, also, Carlyle's fond brother, translator of Dante, whom Carlyle sent to the University and as a student to Germany, sleeps by his side.

From his mother's death until his own—from 1853 to 1881—there were few summers that did not find Carlyle visiting this old kirkyard. To the villagers, Thomas Carlyle at his mother's grave was one of the events of the Ecclefechan summer. In a letter to "brother Alick" in 1856, who had then been long in Canada, Carlyle describes one of these visits thus:[1]—"Yes, there they all lay: father, mother, and Margaret's grave between them . . . I stood silent, with bared head, as in the sacredest place in all the world, for a few moments; and I daresay tears again wetted those hard eyes, which are now unused to weeping." In another letter to the same brother, in 1859, he relates how he went to the kirkyard with "Jamie":—"There they lay so still and dumb, those that were once

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Introduction, p. 33.

so blythe and quick at sight of us: gathered to their sleep under the long grass. I could not forbear a kind of sob like a child's out of my old worn heart at first sight of all this." What possibilities for art are here, had we a painter equal to the subject of Thomas Carlyle, the crowned king of letters, standing with bared head, in his sixty-fourth year, weeping like a child at the grave of his dear ones!

JOHNSTONE MONUMENT.

"There was in those days a teacher of the people."—*Carlyle.*

In this rude old kirkyard, "the sacredest place in all the world" to Carlyle, the graves may be seen of many of the old Burgher-Seceders, whose quaint, shrewd wit Carlyle cherished, his father's elders, or contemporaries, the wise men of the village in his childhood who made the simple club-life of the "old Linden Tree." Chief of graves of Ecclefechan worthies here, however, is that of the Reverend John Johnstone, minister of the meeting-house. "There was in those days," so Carlyle wrote, "a teacher of the people. He sleeps not far from my father who built his monument in the Ecclefechan churchyard, the Teacher and the Taught." This Johnstone monument stands close to the southern wall of the churchyard, an elaborate structure, which tells how it was erected by the Associate Congregation of Ecclefechan (the Burgher-Seceders). The epitaph reads like a funeral sermon, proclaiming the manifold virtues of the

wonderful village preacher, who made Dissent a power in Annandale, who "awed the vicious and edified the saints," and "excited a sentiment of universal esteem and veneration."

Adjoining the Johnstone monument stands the tomb of Dr. Archibald Arnot of Kirkconnell Hall—a mansion on the outskirts of the village towards the railway station—who served with distinction in the Peninsular War, and was one of the medical attendants of Napoleon at St. Helena, "whose (Napoleon's) estimation he won and whose last moments he soothed." In this little graveyard thus sleep two famous men, both natives of the village, who were related to Napoleon; Dr. Arnot as physician and friend in his last dark hours of fallen greatness, and Carlyle, who long proposed to write a history of Napoleon by way of supplement to his *French Revolution*; who in his great prose epic of the "Revolution" interpreted, with unrivalled philosophical insight, the deeper social and political forces then at work, which conditioned both the temporary ascendancy and triumph, and the ultimate *débâcle* that constituted fate for Napoleon, "a man of head, a man of action, steady as bronze, and, if need were, quick as lightning," author of *The Whiff of Grapeshot*; who made Napoleon's career ultimately fruitful of good, in a philosophical sense, to France and to mankind. Napoleon presented his snuff-box to Dr. Arnot, and to none was he so proud to exhibit the souvenir as to Thomas Carlyle.

TOMB OF DR. ARNOT, PHYSICIAN TO NAPOLEON AT ST. HELENA.

But the supreme historical event which these grey old stones have witnessed was the burial of Thomas Carlyle on a February day of driving sleet and snow and encompassing gloom in 1881. Mrs. Carlyle was buried in her father's grave in the churchyard of the old Abbey Kirk at Haddington, "according to compact of forty years back" (1866): that is to say, at the marriage in 1826. Husband and wife were therefore parted in death, each returning to his and her own. I have been informed by one who attended Carlyle's funeral that, when the coffin was being lowered into the grave, whereas there had been no sunshine at any other hour of the dark February day, the sun suddenly shone out for a few minutes from between the parted clouds. It was as if nature could not withhold a sunbeam from Ecclefechan, at the hour when her greatest man had returned to the rest of death, after having kept the shield in the long battles, delivered to him close by in his youth by his Spartan mother, in the spirit of his own glowing passage in *Past and Present:*[1]—"'With it, my son, or upon it!' Thou too shalt return *home* in honour; to thy far-distant home in honour; doubt it not,—if in the battle thou keep thy shield!" And in some homes in the village aged contemporaries of Carlyle, consigned to poverty in life's eventide, who had been his playmates in the village street, or who had been friends of his mother, sorrowed that day with a self-regarding grief; for they had for years been Carlyle's pensioners, deserving or not so deserving, and none at less than two pounds a year.

The flowers of elegy bloom on the graves of the poets. Carlyle somewhat depreciated Wordsworth, was unjust to him, yet he had more in common with the poet of the *Excursion* than he perceived. As enthusiasts for the simplicity and naturalness of peasant life, they were apostles of the same faith, voices crying in the same wilderness of snobbery—the faith which inspired Wordsworth's elegiac verses at the grave of Burns. The plain tomb by "Rotha's living wave" at Grasmere has given us the splendid elegies of Matthew Arnold and William Watson. But where is the poet who might

[1] *Past and Present*, Bk. III, Chap. XV.

compose an adequate elegy at Carlyle's grave? John Sterling might, but he trod "the common road into the great darkness, without any thought of fear, and with very much of hope," forty years before his "master." Clough, also one of Carlyle's disciples, was equal to

CARLYLE'S GRAVE.

"Thou too shalt return home in honour; to thy far-distant home in honour; doubt it not,—if in the battle thou keep thy shield!"—*Carlyle* in *Past and Present.*

it, but "Thyrsis" as "the seeker still untired" died twenty years before Carlyle. Yet, when great poets return to the world, Ecclefechan churchyard—unmelodious though the name be and impossible in rhyme—will not be neglected, for what Watson has sung of Wordsworth is true of Carlyle as well:—

> "The vagrant soul returning to herself
> Wearily wise, must needs to him return."

No possible elegy, however, could do more than give rhythmic expression to superficial and transient emotions. Here, if anywhere, Carlyle's counsel of perfection is pertinent:—"Consider the significance of silence!"

If we would feel in its fulness the inspiration proceeding from this rude sepulchre of a prophet, we must linger around until these

old hills—Brownmoor, Woodcockair, Repentance, and the heights rising towards Birrenswark—have thrown down upon all this hollow the mysterious garniture of night, until the old familiar planets, whose perennial loveliness was to Carlyle "a sad sicht," because it staggered thought with the riddle of the Universe, reappear in the illimitable deeps of space, when baffled reflection may find melancholy made sweet by recollecting Carlyle's favourite couplet of the two silences from Goethe's lyric of life:—

"———Stille
Ruhn oben die Sterne
Und unten die Gräber"

("Stars silent rest o'er us—
Graves under us, silent.")

## CHAPTER XI

# James Carlyle's First Farm

AT Whitsunday, 1815—the removal Term in Scotland—James Carlyle removed with his family from the "arch house" in Ecclefechan to the small farm of Mainhill. Tom was one of the "masters" in the Annan Academy by that time, a young man of twenty, and well able to support himself and give presents at home, "the kitten" even then beginning to carry mice to the "auld cat." Alick was a youth of eighteen, assisting his father, but preferring farm work to the mason trade; John was fourteen and still at school. The four daughters were of the respective ages of twelve, seven, five, and two years. James, Carlyle's youngest brother, was ten. They all required to work after school hours, on Saturdays, and in the vacation, more or less. Ecclefechan had no employment for young people, except work on the farms of the district. James Carlyle had been disciplined to farm work in his boyhood, his wife also before her marriage. On a farm of their own, they might find employment and a future for the children, and make an investment which should yield them adequate comfort in old age.

The social advancement implied by this migration, by the change of occupation, was not of material significance. Probably James Carlyle earned larger profits with the chisel than he ever did subsequently at the plough. But times were bad then, and few houses were being erected. His social *status*, had he cared about it, would be improved by the transition, since, in Scotland, farming has always taken precedence of the trades. His ancestors had been farmers, had even owned a bit of soil; and doubtless the ambition lay concealed in him to get his people back upon the land.

And so the lease of Mainhill was obtained from General Sharpe, laird of Hoddom, to which estate the farm belongs. The rent could not have been more than £120 a year. The sum of from £250 to £300 at least would be needed to stock the farm; to purchase the investments of the outgoing tenant, provide cows, horses, carts, dairy utensils, etc. This outlay must have exhausted the assets of the stonemason, who was not a borrower and never was in debt, for "Tom" wrote from Kirkcaldy, shortly after the removal, offering "twenty pounds or so" to help his father to obtain a threshing machine.

Mainhill was not then by any means one of the most promising farms in Hoddom parish, which, as a whole, was called "the garden of Annandale." In the early years of the last century, farms there were smaller and more numerous than is the case now. Many of them were too limited to be commercially feasible on the principle of laird and tenant related by "the cash nexus" of rent. These bits of crofts in the district have disappeared, being thrown into large farms, out of which the skilful and thrifty farmer can pay rent. Mainhill, however, has not changed materially since James Carlyle's time—"a wet clayey spot" where the tenant must, indeed, earn his bread and get together his rent in the sweat of his brow. Probably it was the best farm accessible to James Carlyle, when he resolved, at the advanced age of fifty-seven, his wife, who was thirteen years younger than her husband, being forty-four, to put aside the chisel in favour of the plough, in his own words "that he might keep all his family about him." He approached the struggle "with his old valour," and prevailed.

Leaving Ecclefechan either by the old or the new road going north, we pass the mansion of Kirkconnell Hall on the right-hand side, the railway station on the left, and ascend the high ground by the Glasgow road for rather more than two miles from the village, and there on the hillside to the left, at a distance of five hundred yards from this road, stands the little farm-house of Main-hill surrounded by the usual collection of outhouses. This high spot—all the Carlyle farms stand high—was Carlyle's home from 1815 to 1825, the scene

of his early wrestling with doubt, of his battle with the temptations of the intellect, of the terrible conflict he had to pass through between reverence for parental authority, example, desire, and allegiance to his personal vision of the pathway of truth and duty. Here, for the first and last time, he experienced the almost insufferable bitterness of family differences, of threatened estrangement.

The road from Ecclefechan to Mainhill affords a most interesting climb out of the hollow upon the hillside. At each fresh point of view in the ascent, it commands an outlook full of picturesque features —the comfortably wooded holm watered by the river Annan; the lower hills around Hoddom; Criffel in the west; and through the glen that divides Woodcockair from Brownmoor, the Cumberland mountains, with the Solway's belt of shining waters separating the two shores.

Froude visited Mainhill twice—first, before Carlyle's death, when preparing his notes for the biography: next, in company with Tyndall and Lecky, on the bleak, snowy morning of the day of Carlyle's funeral.[1] "The situation," he remarks, "is high, utterly bleak and swept by all the winds. Not a tree shelters the premises; the fences are low, the wind permitting nothing to grow but stunted thorn. The view alone redeems the dreariness of the situation." There is no warrant at Mainhill for this absurd heap of depressing superlatives, unless the snowy forenoon in February were to be taken for the condition and aspect of the place all the year round. The farm is sheltered by the hill above from the west and north-west winds; there are some small trees about, and might be more did it pay the farmer to grow trees; while patches of hospitable wood are numerous at intervals on the hillsides around. The hedges are of the average height for a hillside farm, and, although high, the situation is nothing like so bleak as that of thousands of good farms in the hill districts of these islands. Mainhill is part of fertile, undulating, bosky Annandale, and *not* a farm in some treeless waste in the Western Hebrides.

Froude was cradled in the luxurious environment of a Devonshire

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 35.

Rectory. He was reared in the lap of the aristocracy of the Anglican Church, and educated among all the refinements of wealth and the grand tradition at Eton and Oxford. So staggered was he evidently by the miracle of Carlyle's ascent, by the contrast between Carlyle's achievement and the rude aspect of his early home, within and without, that he forgot about the light, ignored the rainbows, and gave only the storm-clouds and the shadows to his pen.

MAINHILL.

"There with my best of nurses and hostesses—my mother; blessed voiceless or low-voiced time, still sweet to me."—*Carlyle* in 1867.

Froude describes the farm-house itself as "a solitary low white-washed cottage, with a few poor outbuildings attached." How could the dwelling-house be "solitary" with the other buildings behind it? Since James Carlyle's period of tenancy, an additional room has been added to the house. In his day there were no ceilings, the interiors being open to the roof. When ceilings were inserted, the walls were slightly raised. There were only the three apartments then, as was the custom even in more important farm-houses than Mainhill—the kitchen, a parlour, and a small room between them, the whole connected by a passage running along the back of the house; the front door entering then from the farm-yard; and sleeping accommodation was provided everywhere. The kitchen is Margaret Carlyle's kitchen still, very roomy; in fact, judged by things common in Scotch houses a century ago, a house in itself. The farm-yard is of considerable size, the byre, stable, and other outhouses conveniently placed, and the buildings at the back are for shelter to the dwelling-house.

There was no piano, nor were there upholstered chairs and sofas, at

Mainhill in James Carlyle's time, but it was a good house of its class in those days, not a hovel. At Mainhill Froude dipped his pen in colours altogether too sombre. He was not aware, or had forgotten, that houses in Scotland a century ago were small all round, and, in the modern sense, sadly deficient in point of domestic conveniences, even to the mansions and castles of the aristocracy; or that some farmers, whose houses were neither larger nor better furnished than James Carlyle's Mainhill, could count their hoard by hundreds, send their daughters in the saddle to kirk and market, and give them substantial dowers.

Froude found the same family occupying Mainhill on both occasions by whom the farm is still occupied. The urbane farmer's wife, in whom Froude saw another Margaret Carlyle, described the historian to me as "a vera nice man tae na," for he was not too proud to ask to be shown the way to the byre. He wished to appreciate on the spot an allusion in one of his mother's letters to "Tom," in which she closes with the remark[1]:—"Good night, Tom, for it is a very stormy night, and I must away to the byre to milk." This good woman, who is proud of the Mainhill associations with Carlyle, was displeased with Froude for stating, in the elaboration of his strange, dramatic purpose to make all things barbarous in the Carlyle country, that, on the morning of the funeral day in 1881, "the little ones were running about barefoot as Carlyle had done." "Our bairns were a' young then," she remarked with a touch of simple pathos, "and our struggle was at its worst, but we always managed to get boots for the bairns' feet in the winter."

James and Margaret Carlyle must have had experience of severe struggles during the first year or two at Mainhill. General Sharpe was not a landlord who could afford to make abatements of rent, and the times were distressful. "We are as independent as ever." So wrote James Carlyle to "Tom" in those hard years. He would have dined on water, as he had once seen some labourers do when oatmeal was ten shillings a stone, rather than have been behind with his rent. They all worked, at least so soon as they could

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 46.

work at all, the mother milking the cows, and taking her turn in harvest with the reaping hook. Implements had not then arrived, nor was even the scythe in use. There is always enough food at a farm, but at Mainhill James Carlyle could not afford to send another son to the University. He was often beset by anxiety concerning the rent; and "Tom's" gifts, sometimes diplomatically conveyed to Alick, of £15 and £20, must have been highly prized. As if to complete the lot of virtuous industry on the farm in those first years, the "kind mother," who sang at her work, and soothed herself in sorrow by tobacco as well as by pious texts, broke down physically and mentally under the strain, at a critical period for maternity, and it became necessary to send her from home for some weeks where she could be placed under restraint. Happily, she recovered soon, and the mental affliction never returned. In a letter to "Tom," in the autumn of 1818, John remarks[1]:—"Our mother is as steady as ever she was, has been upon haystacks three or four times, and has been at church every Sabbath since she came home, behaving always very decently."

James Carlyle made himself a prosperous farmer at Mainhill after the age of fifty-seven, conquered in this stern battle where ninety-nine men out of every hundred would have failed, and kept for "Tom" a home on this breezy hillside, where, through his ten early wander-years, he could always turn for refuge and rest, always consult the dear parental oracle in his "cave of Trophonius." Carlyle has been much accused of gross prejudice and exaggeration in comparing his obscure father to such transcendent geniuses as Burns and Wordsworth. "I knew Robert Burns," he wrote in *Reminiscences*, "and I knew my father. Yet were you to ask me which had the greater natural faculty, I might perhaps actually pause before replying." His father's delineations, in conversation by the fireside, of course, of the Annandale peasant worthies he had known, he remarked in the paper on Southey and Wordsworth published in the "Appendix" to *Reminiscences*, "in rugged, simple force, picturesque ingenuity, veracity and brevity, were, I do judge, superior to even Wordsworth's,

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 56.

as bits of human portraiture." But the closer I get to facts relating to the personal life of James Carlyle, his irascibility and dourness notwithstanding, the more am I disposed to accept Carlyle's insight for the substantial truth in this matter. James Carlyle possessed, indeed, "a heart and brain all sterling and royal." The son was the man of genius, but the father was probably the greater character. Thomas Carlyle was not singular in his extravagant eulogy of his father, whom the children, in the Mainhill years, when the battle was grim, all too serious for many smiles and soft words, rather feared than loved; for John, whose judgment was as sober as it was true, at the age of twenty-one, also paid this high compliment to the brave father[1]:—"He is one of the most wonderful persons in these parts considering the manner in which he was brought up."

From Mainhill, the family walked to Ecclefechan on Sundays regularly to the service at the meeting-house. As farmer, James Carlyle continued his loyalty and zeal in the cause of the Burgher-Secessionists, although there is no evidence that he was ever ordained, after the manner of the Presbyterians, to the office of an elder in the church. Writing to "Tom" from Mainhill in 1817, he alludes to the work of the minister, who was the saintly Johnstone's successor at the meeting-house, thus[2]:—"Mr. Lawson, our priest, is doing very well, and has given us no more paraphrases."

Ten years—the period of Carlyle's coming and going here at Mainhill—is a long period in youth's "sweet summer days that are as long as fifty days" in age. Carlyle's associations with this little hillside farm passed deeply into memory and imagination. The rigorous necessity for incessant toil on the part of the whole family on week-days must have largely neutralised the attractions of his home, and introduced an atmosphere of repellent melancholy. But the Sabbath was observed there with the punctilious cessation from unnecessary work which the Puritanism of the Presbyterian Dissenters enforced. Carlyle accompanied the family to the meeting-house in Ecclefechan regularly, when at home, for some years. In the early

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 146.
[2] Froude, *First Forty Years*, p. 45.

weeks of the year 1854, after he had returned to Chelsea from his mother's funeral, he recalled, with much pathos, those Sundays at Mainhill in his *Journal*, which were then nearly forty years behind him.[1] "Sunday morning last, there came into my mind a vision of the old Sunday mornings at Mainhill, etc. Poor old mother, father, and the rest of us bustling about to get dressed in time and down to the Meeting-House at Ecclefechan. Inexpressibly sad to me, and full of meaning. They are gone now, vanished all; their poor bits of thrifty clothes, more precious to me than Queen's or King's expensive trappings, their pious struggling effort, their 'little life,' it is all away. It has melted all into the still sea."

Yet there was another side to the picture of Carlyle's relations with Mainhill.

[1] Froude, *Life in London*, Vol. II, p. 148.

## CHAPTER XII

# Shelter at Mainhill

THIS little farm of Mainhill played a most important part in Carlyle's earlier period of *sturm und drang*. It was the centre of the forces of moral restraint for him; it was his continuous stimulus towards the cultivation of manhood in an environment of doubt, solitariness, and stubborn impediments. It is probable that Tennyson had Carlyle, quite as much as Arthur Hallam, in his imagination, when he composed the magnificent passage in *In Memoriam*, which describes the young scholar, dowered with the Miltonic loftiness, fighting doubt's fearful battles, refusing to sophisticate his judgment, and for victory finding a stronger faith his own, getting thereby into communion with a Power that dwells in the darkness and the cloud, not less than in the light. In the three years–1819–1820–1821–when the world seemed thronged with Devils all watching to devour him, the piety and unwearying affection of Mainhill kept Carlyle's feet from sinking in the morass. For this was the formative period of his thought-life.

In the first fifteen months after the removal from Ecclefechan to Mainhill, Carlyle would be much at home from Annan. Over two miles had been added to the distance, but eight miles hardly deserved a passing remark in those times. In the winter of 1815, he was introduced to Edward Irving in Waugh's lodgings at Edinburgh. In the summer of 1816, he was appointed through the unsolicited mediation of Professors Christison and Leslie, to the mastership of a new school in Kirkcaldy, where Irving was then head-master of another school. Irving met him in the summer in the house of Adam

Hope in Annan, magnanimously offered to be his friend in Kirkcaldy, and laid the foundations of the splendid friendship between these two geniuses of Annandale which proved more helpful ultimately to Carlyle than to Irving, who was Carlyle's senior by three years. In the autumn of this year, Carlyle migrated to Kirkcaldy.

"Tom's" promotion was a source of honourable pride to the family at Mainhill. They were pleased that he should be the companion there of Irving, whose uncles were neighbouring farmers in Hoddom parish, who had already then a reputation for piety as well as for mathematics. Carlyle returned to Mainhill for the New Year holidays; he was comparatively rich just then, inasmuch as he had saved something for "the rainy day" at Annan. On his return to the school, the Mainhill letters began; for every year saw his brothers and sisters better able to correspond with the scholar brother. His mother was forty-five years old then, but she had never been taught to use the pen. "Tom" was too dear to her to be left out in the world without direct communication with her, and, like the humble heroine she was, she taught herself to write at this late age, her hands stiffened, twisted, torn by continuous labour from her earliest years.

The carrier between Ecclefechan and Edinburgh never passed Mainhill without doing business. Stockings, shirts, butter, cheese, bacon, etc., were regularly sent to "Tom," no matter how severe the struggle might be on the farm. The industrial distress which had driven James Carlyle out of the mason trade was persistent, almost chronic, then in Scotland. It was the period of the Radical "risings," and the terrible cry for bread rang through all the towns and villages —the melancholy aftermath of a protracted period of foreign wars; the tumultuous confusion and want attendant upon the nation's escape from social ruin. In Annandale, then, the lairds and farmers were compelled to organise a special fund, to purchase all the available oatmeal in the district, and to sell it to the starving labourers for anything they could give. James Carlyle had settled with his children at Mainhill not a day too soon.

In Annandale the proprietors seldom undertake repairs in the



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interior of the farmhouses. Mainhill needed much. In the quiet winter James Carlyle turned mason again in his own interest; laid new floors, had partitions and a bit of ceiling erected, and made the small three-roomed house "dry and comfortable," a "snug" home on the healthy hillside, where, despite the prevailing distress, they had "no want of the necessaries of life." "Tom" was constant with his presents in cash or kind. In those troubled wander-years, his considerate benevolence—the recognised symbol of well-doing—allayed suspicion largely regarding "bad books" or "dangerous views," and made him, both as son and brother, proudly beloved.

In the summer of 1817—the year of the mother's breakdown—"Tom's" home-coming from Kirkcaldy was the supreme event. His mother's first letter was written to him this June, and signed "Your Old Minnie." The waters of misgiving were rising, the stream of anxiety for Tom's future was getting swollen and brown, soon to overflow in a flood. He is asked in this letter if he has "got through the Bible yet." He was losing his sleep over *Gibbon* at this time. She thanks him for one of his abounding gifts—"I call it my son's venison." He is to be sure to tell her about his "chapters," about his progress in the matter of reading the Bible. She is glad he is contented in his "place," considering the widespread want of the times.

Carlyle spent the summer holidays—a period of four or five weeks—at Mainhill both in 1817 and in 1818, his Kirkcaldy years. In the autumn of the second year it grew manifest that the school was not successful. The potential Titan in him was rattling his chains, unhappy, in a sphere all too limited for his awakening powers. At Mainhill, during the holiday of 1818, he concealed his troubles. Doubt was shadowing him, and belief conditioned so much among the openings and chances of life! No sooner had he resumed work in Kirkcaldy than he wrote a long and significant letter to his father. It was the letter of a son who desired to please his parent, and the pill was gilded. He gave a valuable account of his walk across the moors to Edinburgh. Alick had accompanied him, both brothers riding on the farm horses, for some distance, as he struck towards the

north-east across the shoulder of Birrenswark and out upon Eskdalemuir. He spent the first night in the lonely manse there, the guest of the hospitable minister. Next morning—a Saturday—he proceeded by the course of the Esk for some miles in spite of rain and mist, then climbed a hill called Glenderg, crossed Ettrick water, ascended another hill from the crest of which St. Mary's Loch and the Loch o' the Lowes could be seen gleaming silvery in the valley beyond, with Yarrow's "dowie dens" to the east. By seven o'clock that night Carlyle was crossing the head of Meggat water in mist and rain, with darkness soon to fall. There he gave a certain "arrant miser" the slip, and prosecuted his tramp for two hours longer, until he reached the hut of the shepherd on Manor water, and found quarters for the night. He was getting near to the town of Peebles and to civilisation. By five o'clock on the Sunday afternoon he was safe in Edinburgh. This wild moorland journey, differently approached sometimes, but always through the same mountainous country, was Carlyle's road to and from the University. It is the country of James Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, and of the Yarrow ballads. It might be described also as the highlands of the Carlyle country, accessible in some part of it to tourists from Moffat on the one side or from Selkirk on the other.

After narrating his experiences on the moors, Carlyle proceeded to make a clean breast of it to his father. He had evidently made some truculent enemies as well as some most devoted friends in Kirkcaldy. But the school was reduced to twelve scholars. Irving was about to leave the town. Carlyle was "tired of the trade." He had saved over £70 against emergencies. If only his father might consent, he would resign his mastership and remove to Edinburgh by December 1st, where he could "try the law" and support himself by private tutorial work. This news, which must have occasioned distress at Mainhill, was prefaced by the intimation that a "black bonnet with ribbons and other equipment" was on its way from Edinburgh as a present for his mother, which he hoped she would accept "for my sake, who owe her so much." He enclosed also the gift of £15 to his father, a sum which he was not likely to need;



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"and no one can have a better right to it than you." This young Carlyle was of all young men the least selfish. He made life hard for himself in the pursuit of his ideals, but he invariably strove to avert suffering or loss to those dear to him in consequence of any apparently hazardous or over-bold new departure of his own.

This remarkable letter was answered from Mainhill by Alick. His father was attending a market at Ecclefechan, and was unable to give any advice. James Carlyle was perplexed. The son he had educated would neither go forward into the pulpit, nor continue in the honourable walks of schoolmastering, and was throwing himself out of everything. What could the youth do with himself, with his dearly-bought University culture? He instructed Alick to suggest that Professor Leslie might be consulted, but "Tom" might do what seemed to him good. In no crisis did James Carlyle display greater wisdom, or a better heart, than at this parting of the ways in his son's career. Alick added a word on his own account in favour of "the law," and promised "what assistance we could make." Carlyle's friends—especially Mr. Swan, afterwards Provost Swan—in Kirkcaldy, made a generous proposal to assist him to form a private school, at a salary ranging from £120 to £150 per annum. Nothing came of the project, and the dawn of December saw Carlyle in Edinburgh, without consulting Professor Leslie, and no longer the Kirkcaldy schoolmaster, but with his freedom regained. Professor Leslie advised him some weeks later to take up engineering, and emigrate ultimately, as an engineer, to America.

Carlyle had now "kicked the schoolmaster functions over." He had saved nearly £100 at Annan and Kirkcaldy, which implies that he had spent less upon pleasures for himself than upon gifts to his family. Whatever should happen to him in Edinburgh, he was assured beforehand of the attentions of Mainhill through the indispensable carrier. His washing could be done for him at home, and the box made larger and packed with necessaries. For the frugal sum of 15*s.* or 16*s.* per week, he could board comfortably in the city. He was not idle for a day, attended the Natural History class in the University, obtained bits of private teaching, mainly

through Irving, studied mineralogy, began to coquette with the law, and arranged with one Jardine, from Annandale, for the free exchange of lessons in French for lessons in German. He could tell his mother at Mainhill by the end of December that he was earning six guineas a month by teaching privately, which exacted but three hours a day from him, and left him ample time to prosecute his reading and special studies. Irving was still near to him, and with Irving for his companion, in those years, he could not be miserable. The minister of Ruthwell, Mr. Duncan, always kind to him, after whom Mainhill called the first light-legged cob they came to possess "Duncan," sent him letters of introduction to literary men, notably to Doctor Brewster (afterwards Sir David Brewster), recommending him for work in connection with the *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*, of which Brewster was the editor. He contemplated the feasibility of qualifying for the Scotch Bar. His heart was brave. He entreated his mother not to be uneasy about him, and asked the entire anxious circle at Mainhill to remember that he was "a stubborn dog"; that evil fortune should neither break nor bend his heart.

The New Year arrived, but Carlyle reckoned it prudent to remain in Edinburgh over the holidays. James Carlyle was beginning to anticipate improved returns from the "wet, clayey spot," and could inform "Tom" in a cheerful tone that they had "plenty of meal and potatoes," adding the interesting words—"and I think we can pay the rent this year at any time we think proper." Alick, the next brother, was "Tom's" echo at Mainhill, and was beginning to have many arguments with his mother "about religion," her supreme topic. The early spring brought to Carlyle his first commission from Brewster, viz., a paper in French by Berzelius to translate. So far he had written nothing that had come to be printed. His first attempt in the form of a description of a walk in Yarrow had been rejected; his second, an article sent to Jeffrey for the *Edinburgh Review* some years before he was introduced to Jeffrey, shared the same disheartening fate. He had trouble with people wanting him to teach for less than the standard fee of two guineas a month for an hour each day, and kept his independence sternly against all odds.

He was looking forward to the summer at Mainhill, and hoped to help his brother there "at the haytime."

At Mainhill, the "kind mother" was painfully anxious on "Tom's" account. He was in danger of losing his soul, and "Alick" —even John—was following him. James Carlyle, although carrying a great pain at his heart, was magnanimously reticent on this disagreeable new phase of the family life. The germ of reverent rationalism was hidden in the Presbyterian Dissent, and James Carlyle was too big a character to be stupidly or tyrannously intolerant even of what to him were alarming phases of opinion that had invaded the otherwise happy fireside circle. The mother, however, could not restrain herself from earnest remonstrance. At this New Year, she sat up until two o'clock in the morning over a short pathetic letter to "Tom," pleading with him to read the Bible. As spring returned, he informed her that he was reading in his "favourite Job." He was unsettled, but hope had not failed him. He quoted from d'Alembert, in a stilted enough manner, the epigram to the effect that the scholar who fears poverty can never possess and enjoy truth and liberty. He hopes to be with her soon, to study in "yonder little room," and grow wise and strong by her side. Twelve days later, his mother answered this letter in an undertone of anguish. She advised him to come home early, and, addressing him as "my dear, dear son," entreated him to "study the Word of God." This remarkable letter contained a postscript, which, while it reveals the painful misgiving at Margaret Carlyle's heart, in point of self-renunciation, is worthy of the heroic ages of Christianity: "P.S.—Do make religion your great study, Tom; if you repent it, I will bear the blame for ever."

Carlyle, to the observer of the outward drift of his career, was then a young man of twenty-three whose character was weakened by instability. He had abandoned the ministry. He had withdrawn from the teaching profession. He was bidding fair to pass into one of a numerous class in Scotland, viz., the feckless mortals with nothing about them except "the gift of the gab." His reputation at Mainhill in 1819, when he went home in search of shelter from the blast, was analogous, up to a point, to the social repute of Burns

at Mossgiel—to the neighbours "a guid-for-naething body," and to poetry the author of "The Vision," and the satire of "The Twa Dogs." Carlyle's personal character saved him. He was incapable of taking any sort of mud-bath, and, all arguments notwithstanding, conduct counted at Mainhill. If he was without fear, he was without reproach also. Yet the names of Gibbon and David Hume carried alarm to the fireside, and the best of mothers had not then sufficient confidence in her clever son to enable her to contemplate his defection from the creed of the Burgher Seceders with the calm of mind which came to her in later years. Carlyle's life was blameless, and Mainhill was proud of him, although the affectionate circle by the rude kitchen fire might fail to comprehend how he had deliberately cast himself upon a path of thorns in the mood of Milton's exalted query, which he quoted in one of the letters to Mitchell of this period:

> "For who would lose,
> Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
> Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
> To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
> In the wide womb of uncreated night,
> Devoid of sense and motion?"

Carlyle's first conquest was at home, the conquest of his own family, but the battles of the campaign, in the spring of 1819, had yet to be fought.

## CHAPTER XIII

# The Crisis at Mainhill

THE close of the University session at Edinburgh in the spring of 1819 set Carlyle free to retreat upon Mainhill. He had no definite work in hand, no plan of campaign to prosecute, hardly even an ideal which he could intelligently define to himself. His first commission for a translation from the French given to him by Sir David Brewster was finished. No more work was needed in that quarter. The unwearying endeavours of the family at Mainhill to minister to "Tom's" comfort failed to make him happy in Annandale. The tempest had penetrated even to his shelter.

The years 1819 and 1820, in Carlyle's early life, are mythically adumbrated in the two consecutive chapters of the Second Book of *Sartor—Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh*, and *The Everlasting No.* The crisis in his hidden intellectual life, the painful and perilous transition he was making from the Old Faith to the New, involved a corresponding family crisis at Mainhill. "Thus," he remarks in *Sartor*," the eagle, when he moults is sickly; and, to attain his new beak, must harshly dash off the old one upon rocks." For almost two years, his mother ceased to write to him when he was absent in Edinburgh. "Malignant" tongues were coming between him and her esteem. The stream of the family life was breaking into noise and foam among new rocks.

Theology, which, in Scotland at least, cannot be separated in the mind of the devoted peasant from religion and morality, was responsible for the gathering gloom. To the Presbyterian faith and piety of the stern, dour Scot, "doubt is devil-born": error in

theology is the symptom of a bad heart, the sure sign of deficiency in the common-sense which is fundamental in good and honoured citizenship. Carlyle, while encouraging his brothers to read Hume, while studying *Faust* in a dry ditch on the Mainhill farm, while reading such alien books as Rousseau's *Confessions*, was gravely suspect at home. In the summer of 1819, he had not acquired his later restraint of reverence; had not taught himself to consume his own smoke, or spare the household the violence of criticism in conversation by the fireside; had not discovered the function of silence there; but was destroying all things conventionally held to be sacred to all comers, and earning an ill name. Probably he hoped to persuade his parents to lift the theological anchor with him, and drift out to sea. In any case, house and hill, all that dreadful summer, rang with uproarious arguings about religion. Was the Bible infallible? Were the miracles to be believed? Were the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith any longer tenable? Sparks flew all round from the anvil of temper. The younger children were kept unhappy through it all. Love of "Tom" intensified the parental anguish. The good mother could not let "Tom," and his fearful new opinions, alone. Carlyle was beating his music out, and there lived more faith in him than his mother could discern. He was dour about little compromises; stood outside while family worship was bringing "another blue day" to a befitting close; attended the meeting-house under a protest often distressful in its vehemence. Nor did the old peace, the old sportive joys, return at Mainhill, until the "kind mother" ceased to argue with "Tom" concerning points of doctrine, gave him credit for having "the root of the matter in him," and imitated the tolerance, trust, and silent forbearance of his father.

In this first summer at Mainhill, after Carlyle had abandoned schoolmastering and flung himself upon dangerous ebbing and flowing tides (1819), he was still the student, and did not essay any ambitious schemes of literary work. Jardine, the student who knew German, was accessible at Applegarth, near Lockerbie, and Carlyle continued to exchange lessons with him from Mainhill, at the rate of one lesson

a week. He continued his studies in mineralogy, and indulged in miscellaneous reading among serious books. Beyond the home circle, he had few congenial friends in Annandale, and was seldom a visitor in Ecclefechan. Irving was in Edinburgh completing his curriculum in Divinity. From Bogside—a farm near the Hoddom manse then which is now part of a larger farm—his friend, second-cousin indeed, Johnstone emigrated to Nova Scotia in the early summer, Carlyle accompanying him across the Solway to Workington—the Johnstone whom Mitchell compared to Hogg's Kilmeny—"as pure as pure can be."

Restless and unsettled within himself, Carlyle was dissatisfied, at this time, even with Mainhill. For the first, last, and only short-lived period in his life, the peculiar love his mother had for him lost its charm. He could find some measure of relief to his pent-up emotions in letters to Irving, who appealed to his "dear Carlyle" to "weary not of the country, and wished he could be with him to charm the melancholy of solitude." Carlyle's world was out of joint. The roads around Mainhill were bad, and he could not enjoy his rides on the "slender steed" called "Duncan" which Alick kept mainly for "Tom's" convenience. Everything was topsy-turvy in his life. He could not be always riding down to the Ruthwell manse on visits to Mitchell and Mr. Duncan, nor always hunting for fresh books at Dumfries. His companion in chief was solitude, melancholy, often bitter, as he wandered on the moors around Birrenswark, or hid himself in the glens by the Water of Milk and the river Annan, or "sauntered about on the farm, building deceitful hopes." This year 1819—the summer portion of it especially—was marked always as *horribile dictu* in Carlyle's memory, never alluded to without pain as of one forced to recall some hairbreadth escape from death in a dungeon and by slow-wasting torture.

October witnessed Carlyle parting from his brother John on the summit of Ericstane—a considerable hill to the north which commands the upper reaches of Annandale—on his way back across the moors to Edinburgh, where he secured a back-room in the house of a tailor at the rate of six shillings per week, fire included. These

highlands of the Carlyle country, sublime to Carlyle himself in happier days and when the emotions they inspired were recollected in tranquillity, were, on this occasion, "the most mournful in Europe"—an example of the truth of Coleridge's theory of subjectivity—"Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud."

Back in the city, Carlyle enrolled his name in the class of Scots Law at the University, under Professor Hume, nephew of the

THOMAS CARLYLE.
*From an engraving by J. C. Armytage, after Samuel Lawrence.*

philosopher of this name, whose lectures he attended for the session. Evidently resolved upon concentrating his energies upon legal studies, he does not seem to have sought tutorial work this winter, dividing the day between study and walking, and composing his first abortive article offered to the *Edinburgh Review*. His funds were not strong. He was sorely dejected. The riots among the starving labourers in Scotland touched him deeply, and intensified the bitterness of his own

lot, nor did he always remember that nobody except himself was to blame for his sufferings, inasmuch as he had thrown himself out of regular employment, and was making a scholar's tedious investment. Mainhill could not forget him, nor he "the innocent group" there. Ever like a traveller in some barbarous land turning his thoughts homeward did Carlyle's heart turn towards the little farm-house on the hillside. His mother had not written to him, but he sent her a letter regularly in the box by the carrier. In one letter, he begs her to write to him "very copiously," and adds:—"I trust, my dear Mother, we *shall* yet agree in all things. But absolute sameness of opinion, upon any point, is not, as I have often said, to be looked for in this low, erring world." Alick at Mainhill was his treasurer, and made his supplies of tobacco secure, which had to be kept "very wet."

As the New Year broke (1820), Carlyle was detained in town by the Scots Law class. The old fond relations with his mother were hard to recover, for Margaret Carlyle had a mind of her own, and a remarkable degree of pertinacity. Towards the close of this January he complained that she "had not favoured him with a line this great while." He tried to smooth down the rough places.[1] "Do you ever recollect," he asks, "our evening meals in the little room, during the last, to me unusual but not unhappy summer?" The triple negative here was suggested by the diplomacy of filial affection obstructed seriously for the nonce. He assured his mother that he was in good health, but, in the same month, his first bad attack of indigestion arrived, for he informed Mitchell, in March, that "a train of ill-health, with its usual depression, aggravated by other privations and calamities too tedious to particularise," had pressed heavily upon him since the end of January. In February the attack was at its worst. His allusions to his condition in letters alarmed his family at Mainhill. Was "Tom" about to die among strangers? His language must have been lurid, for there was no cause for alarm. It was simply bad digestion, arising probably from overmuch solitary smoking, from insufficient food imperfectly cooked,

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. I., p. 274.

from his dull, sedentary life, from a specific habitude of body that was new to his kind, these gastronomic woes being the penalty Carlyle had to pay as the first scholar and thinker in a race of people who lived and worked in the fresh air. Mainhill, nevertheless, was in tears.

John, the third son, had just been appointed one of the masters in the Annan Academy. He was summoned to Mainhill on account of the grave news concerning "Tom." What was to be done? Had the "kind mother" preached at him too much? She did not care to write, her heart was too full for words. John was asked to communicate in name of the family, the father adding a brief note. They were all[1] "so uneasy." He was called upon for "a speedy answer." He must come home at once, if he could bear the journey without danger, and forget the "bitterness" of the preceding summer. The theological differences notwithstanding, he was assured that he should find Mainhill "emphatically a home." His mother called upon him to come home "by every tie of affection, and by all that was sacred." It would be her supreme happiness to nurse him. His father earnestly urged him to "come home as soon as possible, and for ever oblige, dear son, your loving father." There was no danger, no reason whatever why "Tom" should withdraw from the class of Scots Law before the session's close. Yet the scare revealed to Carlyle the depth and strength of the love his humble kinsfolk bore for him, notwithstanding his hitherto unsettled life, his apparently rebellious mind and will.

Dawn was coming on. In this February, Sir David Brewster had given Carlyle refreshment and stimulus in the shape of his first commission for any kind of literary composition. It was then that, in recovered spirits—for literature was his destiny and no other occupation satisfied his heart—he composed the first batch of the short biographical sketches for the *Encyclopædia*, which, since his death, have been published—in disregard of Carlyle's known wish. The first six, from Montaigne to Sir John Moore, were written in March of this year, while the sketches of Necker and Nelson were

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I., p. 79.

finished before the close of the session. In his "Foreword" to this volume of the "hack" work of Carlyle's "'prentice hand," Mr. R. S. Crockett has given us an illustration of what Carlyle would have called in lethal scorn "the quack as man-of-letters." He describes these sketches as having been written "in the peasant's but-and-ben at Mainhill in the late summer and autumn of 1820"; and narrates how James Carlyle showed a greater respect for his son when he could exhibit "Sir David Brewster's fifteen-guinea cheques"; also, how, with the first money so earned, he presented his father with a pair of "marvellous spectacles." Mr. Crockett can, we fear, give Froude points in the matter of inaccuracy. That Froude so told the story up to a point, is no excuse, because the "Early Letters" are authoritative at first hand. Mainhill was not "a but-and-ben," it was a farm-house of three apartments. Carlyle was working for Brewster at intervals for nearly two years—from February, 1820, until the late autumn of 1821; and most of this work was executed in Edinburgh, access to libraries being indispensable. Very little of it, some reviews and translations mainly, could be done at Mainhill. The silver spectacles were not presented to his father until November, 1821. As for Brewster's remuneration, Carlyle relates, in *Reminiscences*, that he did this work for Brewster "on most frugal terms," and he informed his friend, Mitchell, that the fees received would "hardly sustain life." The single cheque for fifteen guineas to which he refers in a letter to his father must have covered a good deal of work. Mr. Crockett's fiction about Mainhill is less strange than the truth. To write lies in praise of Carlyle is to insult his memory; more so, when such rubbish is set to the half-concealed refrain of—"I, too, am another Carlyle, the Galloway one!" Nor was it the case that the sketch of Montesquieu attracted the notice of Jeffrey, and led to an offer of work on the *Edinburgh Review*. Where is Mr. Crockett's authority for this statement? It was not until 1827,[1] after his marriage, that Carlyle was introduced to Jeffrey by letter from Mr. Procter (Barry Cornwall).

Carlyle was tired of the hard life of the winter in Edinburgh.

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. II., p. 20.

With the end of the Scots Law lectures, he kicked the project of becoming an Edinburgh Advocate over, as he had previously done with the pulpit and schoolmastering. He had spoken in ignorance when he flattered himself that he might prosper at the law without "mean compliances." Carlyle was a creature of moods. His principles were constant, his moods inconsistent. His imagination resembled the Annandale sky, changing from brightness to gloom with the seasons of his life, gloom having always the longer reign. Brewster had encouraged him in the pursuit of fame in letters. But he meant to turn towards Mainhill again, where, "in the midst of sincere affection, liberty, and vernal breezes," he might forget "the smoke and stir of this dull world"—an unconscious adaptation of the opening lines of Milton's *Comus*—home with a French or Latin book under his arm, "home any way!" Brewster promised him some translation work for the country, and he was content.

Carlyle was tactful, except when his tongue exploded. He had the intellect of the diplomatist at his best. And so he prepared the way at Mainhill, in this crisis, by a singularly careful letter to his mother. His style was improving under the discipline of Brewster's tasks, and this[1] letter touches a new elevation. He recalled the days of childhood, shining "so brightly across the tempests and inquietudes of succeeding times," and could never be sufficiently grateful for his mother's love and early instruction. They were separated in belief, and might be "still more widely separated," but the lessons received from her would never be effaced from his memory. His health had improved; the future was still as unsettled as ever. Yet she must not despair of her boy, for he was diligent, harmless, thrifty, and all would be right with him in the end. This letter terminated the crisis at Mainhill. He would be home before 1st May.

Irving was now settled as assistant-minister to Dr. Chalmers at Glasgow. Both he and Carlyle were profoundly moved by the social distress of the time, and Carlyle watched "the Radical risings" with

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I., p. 84.

a keen, though silent, sympathy. His temperament was always on the side of the people. His Individualism was more severe than Socialism could be in the way of calling upon lotus-eating wealth to disgorge, in order to save virtuous industry from ghastly want. He therefore planned a visit to Glasgow on his way home, that he might see "the dreadfully real grievances" of the Radicals; that he might debate certain points in theology, also, with the good, tolerant, genial, buoyant Irving.

It was the merit of Edward Irving to have a belief in Carlyle which nothing could diminish or destroy. He invited him warmly to Glasgow, "I have no more fear of your final success," he wrote, "than Noah had of the Deluge ceasing." He was returning to his father's shelter without even a leaf, but it would not always be so. The Glasgow visit over, Irving accompanied Carlyle by way of Paisley, and through a corner of Lanarkshire, as far as Drumclog Moss, familiar to readers of Scott's *Old Mortality*. On that spot sacred to Scottish Presbyterians, the two young men lingered, engaged in earnest conversation, religion being the all-absorbing topic. The sun was setting when they parted "each on his own path." Crossing into Ayrshire, Carlyle spent the night in a little inn at Muirkirk, under the glare of the furnaces there, rose next morning by four o'clock, and walked across "the waste moors" until he got his first view of "bonny Nithsdale"—"mournful and utterly lonely"—and passing Auldgirth bridge, got to Dumfries by eight o'clock in the evening[1]—"the longest walk I ever made, fifty-four miles in one day." From Dumfries he crossed into Annandale, and rejoined the anxious, expectant home circle at Mainhill. He was himself at this time the Teufelsdröckh, who,[2] "as the wounded eagle is said to make for its own eyrie, and indeed military deserters, and all hunted outcast creatures, turn as if by instinct to their birthland,"—was flying "in this extremity, towards his native Entepfuhl; but reflecting that there no help *awaited* him," that he should have to "take but one wistful look from the distance, and then wend else-whither."

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. I., p. 181.

[2] *Sartor Resartus*, "Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh," Book II., Chap. VI.

This small, rude farm-house of Mainhill was the scene that May day of a sacred reconcilement after love partially estranged. "Tom" was not the prodigal son, rather the virtuous elder brother. What could the pious mother do, except to lay her son to her heart, to love and care for him as of old, no matter how wide, how distressful to her, the gulf might be which separated them on the side of religious belief? If the end of the Gospel preached by the saintly Johnstone so long in the meeting-house were personal goodness, her "Tom" was good, and malignant tongues might babble to the winds. And so the crisis was past, the doubting, critical, vehement scholar son was Margaret Carlyle's "ribe" (tall, lean, unprofitable, like the colewort that is all stock and no leaf) of a boy still, and in her mother's heart hope of him could not die.

## CHAPTER XIV

## Mainhill after Reconcilement

"No more of that: it did not conquer me, or quite kill me, thank God." With these characteristic words, Carlyle dismissed this gloomy period of his earlier struggle. Through the love that followed him from Mainhill he was helped to survive. In the summer of 1820, his outlook was still exceedingly dark, but he was reconciled to "the kind mother." This meant next to everything. He had conquered at home; that is to say, he had won the liberty there to think for himself in religion; and this without any permanent rift in the lute which could make mute the music of the simple, happy life on the farm. Estrangement, the experience of having been violently driven from home, as not a few honest Scotch lads have been, whose parents intended them for the pulpit, for the alleged crime of theological doubt, would have ruined Carlyle, with the loss to mankind of Mr. John Morley's "foremost figure in English literature."

The summer of 1820 at Mainhill was as happy as its predecessor had been miserable. Years made the younger members of the family more companionable. Alick provided Carlyle with an improved riding pony. James Carlyle was making "the wet, clayey spot" more fruitful, more comfortable. Not that Carlyle was out of the bog. He was not "altogether reconciled to the rest which is enjoyed upon the pillow of uncertainty." Useful work was always the *conditio-sine-quâ-non* of even such limited contentment as his temperament could command, and he was to translate and write some trifles (for Brewster) during summer—if his spirits served!

He had nothing except ridicule now for the Law, and he began to fear lest he should never have "any settled way of doing."

The summer months were regular, uneventful. Irving spent his holidays in Annandale, and Carlyle and he walked in the woods by

MAINHILL FROM THE BYRE.

"Blessed be 'poverty which was never indigence in any form."—*Carlyle*, concerning the Mainhill period.

"the bonny river," or visited old friends together, Irving encouraging his disconsolate companion to pursue literature with his undivided strength. At Mainhill, Carlyle rode a great deal, "delved" in the garden, helped at the haymaking a little, wrote or translated in the small apartment "down the house," in which his mother and he had "tea-shines" in the afternoons, or smoked together in an atmosphere of tobacco "reek" and proud tranquillity. His brother John, while teaching at Annan, was also preparing for the University, advised by Irving to adopt the profession of medicine. Carlyle was determined to help John, as his father in the earlier Ecclefechan years had assisted him, to become an accomplished scholar. In the autumn Carlyle declined the offer of a tutorship in Cumberland, despite Irving's counsel to the contrary. The summer at Mainhill had given him improved health, and he was resolved to resume the battle at Edinburgh.

Carlyle did not return to the University. Brewster continued his patron. His German was equal to such classics as Schiller and Goethe. He settled in Edinburgh on translation chiefly bent, but made expenses secure by earning four guineas a month "by teaching two dandies mathematics." There was still concern at Mainhill, deepened by the good relations the summer had restored. "Alick," and John at Annan, were his correspondents. The parents knew not what to think. Margaret Carlyle could only have confidence in her "ribe of a boy." He was slowly removing mountains. Brewster had printed "his article"—evidently not one of the sketches for the *Encyclopædia*, but an article for a philosophical journal which Brewster had established. Tait, the bookseller, and other competent judges, were vociferous in their encouragements. But "this drivelling state of painful idleness" was irksome. He was contemplating any sort of honest work that might be got in order to rid himself of "frigid impotence," and escape from "the miserable strife of inward will against outward necessity." In words of exquisite tenderness he strove to comfort his mother, assuring her that their "opinions, though clothed in different garbs, were analogous at bottom."

Carlyle spent the Christmas and New-Year week (1820–21) with Irving at Glasgow. The society there did him good. It was there he met Graham of Burnswark—a small estate on the slopes of Birrenswark hill—who was then a merchant in Glasgow; a splendid personality who was Carlyle's most devoted friend subsequently, and wept with him in his old age at his mother's burial in Ecclefechan. Irving had taken him out of himself, and he had actually been "listening to music and the voice of song amid dandy clerks and sparkling females."

Notwithstanding the failure of an offer of a translation of Schiller made to Longmans, Carlyle was getting his feet established in Edinburgh circles and he could now send good cheer to Mainhill, for "braw days were comin'." He was dining with Professors, and at supper with McCulloch, the economist, where he met McDiarmid and Ritchie, then proprietors of the embryonic *Scotsman*. His assurance, as given to his mother, was that his conscience did not sting,

though it might wound, nor did his heart condemn when it fainted! Loneliness and imperfect digestion, probably insufficient food also, and the torture of partial hunger, threw him into a mood of vituperation against Edinburgh—"this accursed, stinking, reeky mass of stones and lime and dung"—and he fled to Kirkcaldy for a week, where he got better every day. His superior moods returned. In March he confessed to Mitchell that he had "tried about twenty plans during the winter in the way of authorship in vain." Yet he would bate no jot of heart or hope. His mother, impressed by his pluck, urged her "brave boy to keep up his heart," and asked him to tell her "honestly if he read his chapter e'en and morn."

In this year (1821), Carlyle arranged to keep pegging away in Edinburgh until August. The box from Mainhill by the carrier kept him lavishly supplied with dairy produce, etc., and his expenses remained at an easy *minimum*. These months—from the end of April to midsummer, 1821—form one of the most interesting periods in the great story of Carlyle's ascent and conquest. Two momentous events then occurred. In May, Irving came across from Glasgow to attend the General Assembly, and tarried in the east in order to visit at Haddington, taking Carlyle with him. The excursion extended over three or four days. Carlyle was "as happy as a lark in May," and that visit to Haddington proved "the beginning of a new life to him." He was then introduced to Jeannie Welsh. "Sight for ever memorable to me," he wrote in the sketch in *Reminiscences*; "the summer dusk, and that bright pair of eyes enquiringly fixed on me," he could never forget. It was love, the pure, high love of which alone Carlyle was capable, at first sight. He would have nothing to do with[1] "the shining Miss Augusta," but "he should not be so hard to deal with" were Jeannie Welsh in question.

The second determinative experience of this summer of 1821 was the "conversion" or "new birth" in Leith Walk, the "Rue St. Thomas de l'Enfer" of the chapter on the "Everlasting No"

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. I, p. 175.

in *Sartor Resartus*. Carlyle bathed daily on the sands between Leith and Portobello; and, on his way down to the sea one day, after a long period of sleeplessness, he came by this strange vision, and "took the Devil by the nose," Faith being born in him afresh out of the tempests and blackness of darkness that had attended several years of doubt. "The Everlasting No had said: Behold, thou art fatherless, outcast, and the universe is mine (the Devil's); to which my whole Me now made answer; I am not thine but free, and for ever hate thee. It is from this hour I incline to date my spiritual new birth; perhaps I directly thereupon began to be a man."[1]

From this time (1821) Carlyle's letters to Mainhill were set to brighter tunes, and carried hope and cheer to the mother's heart there. In Jeannie Welsh he had found a new friend and correspondent, a new fountain of refreshing sympathy. The influence from the Haddington side must have helped him to "take the Devil by the nose" in Leith Walk; must have put more cheerfulness and hope into his epistles to Mainhill. He emerges now like a captive escaped from prison and restored to a world of sunshine, and flowers, and the songs of happy birds. His "confidence in Fortune seemed to increase as her offers to him diminished." His savings were almost spent. He had heaps of little grumbles, to be sure, for grumbling was 'the taint in the blood,' but joy had been recovered. He had tasted the magic cup of literature, and meant to drink of it for ever, though bitter ingredients enough might be mixed with the liquor. No allusion was made, however, in the letters to Mainhill to "the pair of bright eyes" he had found at Haddington.

The second week in August (1821) discovered Carlyle back at Mainhill, more sportive, more hopeful than he had been for many years. He was poor, but he had credit in the literary market under his feet. He possessed real, computable assets of scholarship. The time had come when he could cease to walk to Mainhill—seventy weary miles mostly across desolate moors. He now travelled by the

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. VIII.

stage-coach as far as Moffat, which is eighteen miles from Mainhill. "Carlyle," so Froude[1] narrates, "went home alone, walking as he always did, and sending his box by the carrier"; and he proceeds to expatiate upon the long, frugal walk in a passage which is entirely misplaced chronologically in the biography. In a letter to Alick, under date of August 9th, 1821, Carlyle distinctly states that he would travel by the Dumfries mail-coach, arriving at Moffat about four in the afternoon, where Alick was to meet him with the horses, and they were to ride down together to Mainhill.

Pleasantly passed the harvest months at Mainhill. Carlyle did a trifle of work for Brewster, and took pains—a lover's pains—with letters to Jeannie Welsh. Some of these letters were valuable little essays, comparable to some of Goldsmith's gems, and ethically more pregnant with celestial fire. It was from the "wee room down the house" at Mainhill that the singularly chaste letter was sent to Miss Welsh, under date of 1st September 1821, which contains one of the most eloquent expositions of the end of culture to be found anywhere in literature, in which he tells her that "sympathy is the very soul of life."[2] "Often," he there wrote, "it is true, the studious man wanders in solitude over rocky and tempestuous regions; but sometimes a lovely scene will strike his eye as well as that of another, and touch him more keenly than it does another:—some sequestered dale embosomed calmly among the barren mountains of life,—so verdant and smiling and balmy—so like a home and resting-place for the wearied spirit, that even the sight of it is happiness: to *reach* it would be too much; would bring Eden back again into the world, and make Death to be indeed, what cowards have named him, the enemy of man." *Paroles à double entente* perhaps! These Mainhill letters of this autumn show us Carlyle's earlier style at its best, for the gold was coming out of the fire doubly refined. No great Carlylean books were written at Mainhill, but the solitary letter which I have quoted above, is enough to give the small farm-house imperishable fame in literature.

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 137.
[2] *Early Letters*, Vol. I, p. 369.

Carlyle, in what for him was a gay mood, visited much more than usual in Annandale, either in Irving's company or alone, this autumn. He rode far into Galloway on a visit to his college friend, the Rev. Thomas Murray, author of *The Literary History of Galloway*,

MAINHILL FROM THE NORTH ROAD.

"His roof was my shelter, which a word from him (in those sour days of wounded vanity) would have deprived me of."—*Carlyle.*

and was greatly benefited in health by the excursion. In spite of "an unutterable nervousness," he was exceedingly happy at Mainhill. By November, he was back in Edinburgh, with work for Brewster to deliver, and desperate hope at his heart. Carlyle never was so poor as to be unable or unwilling to load the table at Mainhill with presents. He had a belief in the cohesive affection of the family as the most remunerative of all possible investments. In most of Carlyle's friendships and attachments, however, not excepting the home ties, he somehow had the best of it. It was so as between

him and Mainhill. Few young men (he was 26 in 1821), fit for wage-earning work, have been so extensively indebted to the sacrifices of their humble parents on their behalf as was Carlyle. Mainhill kept him practically for several years after he had passed his majority. He was no ingrate. He never forgot this unusual primary obligation. In life and death alike he did what he could to requite his parents, and desired that their grave and his own should occupy the same plot, while in death they shared his fame. Carlyle was childlike in his fondness for giving presents—a beautiful trait in an otherwise rugged nature. In Edinburgh this autumn he had no sooner received the money due to him from Brewster than he presented his father with a pair of costly silver spectacles, and his mother with "a brown pair" of the same. The honest farmer was glad of his son's gift, "nigh weeping." The "kind mother" was promised a new bonnet as well. There is not in all the multifarious Carlyle literature the shadow of evidence of dissatisfaction with him in the matter of give-and-take among the members of his own family. Selfish in some directions he became, selfish in relation to his kith and kin he could not be.

There was confidence now at Mainhill. "Tom" was coming out right. He was now fairly at work as a translator in Edinburgh, and Brewster had secured a contract for him which was of various value. He was to translate Legendre's *Elements of Geometry and Trigonometry* for the considerable fee of £50. At this work he could earn, so he calculated, three guineas a week by translating for four hours each day. This systematic arrangement left him time for experiment in original composition. He had some success with a short-lived *New Edinburgh Review*, to which he contributed a criticism of Goethe's *Faust*. On the little farm, times were continuously bad for James Carlyle. Mainhill was "a place of horrid drudgery." Rents in Annandale were not less difficult to get together under the old fiscal system of Protective Tariffs in 1821 than under the system of Free Trade in 1903. General Sharpe, the laird, however, had put heart of hope into the toiling farmer by the promise of "some downsteep (reduction) of rent." James Carlyle's struggle was still

severe; he could not see far ahead, and he was an old man now of sixty-three; but he could write to "Tom" that he was "as independent as ever," nor did he ever need to stoop to ask his sons, or any other friend, to help him to meet the inevitable rent-day.

DRUMLANRIG CASTLE.

"Did I ever tell you that I have a beautiful view of Drumlanrig hanging in this room? It was done by Lady Ashburton."—*Mrs. Carlyle* to *Mrs. Russell*, in 1855.

## CHAPTER XV

## Mainhill's "Best of Boys"

IN January, 1822, Carlyle reaped the full harvest of his friendship with Edward Irving, one of the purest and most exalted friendships chronicled in literature. It came in the shape of an appointment as tutor to the Buller family, especially to Charles Buller, who died young, but not before he had won distinction in the House of Commons. Irving had been "called" from Glasgow to the pulpit of the Scotch Presbyterian Church in Hatton Garden, London, and Mrs. Buller had consulted him regarding the education of her two boys. Carlyle was never absent then from Irving's mind. The two had parted affectionately at the Black Bull Hotel, Glasgow, Carlyle loading Irving with cigars which the latter knew not how to smoke. Irving's magnanimity never waned, and he was convinced that Carlyle was gifted with genius, and waited only for his opportunity.

The Buller opening presented itself to Irving in the light of a fit occupation, for a period at least, for his struggling friend. His recommendation was successful, and the post was offered to Carlyle, the salary to be £200 *per annum*, and board, if he should happen to live in the house. The boys were to join Carlyle, in the first instance, at Edinburgh. About this time, the minister of Kirkcaldy secured for Carlyle the offer of the editorship of a newspaper in the town of Dundee, at a salary of £100 a year and a percentage of the profits, but he "had nae wul o't." Carlyle decided to make trial of this tutorial engagement with remarkable celerity; indeed, without a night's delay. His outlook otherwise then was analogous to that of Coleridge when he received the letter from Wedgwood, at

Wem in Shropshire, in presence of young William Hazlitt, offering him aid at the rate of £150 *per annum*, on condition that he should devote himself exclusively to the study of poetry and philosophy. "Coleridge," wrote Hazlitt, "seemed to make up his mind in the act of tying on one of his shoes" Carlyle foresaw liberation from drudgery, want, anxiety, dependence more or less upon Mainhill, in the Buller offer, together with a splendid chance of prosecuting his task as a translator from the German, and he did not hesitate to accept it provisionally, nor so much as delay in order to consult his parents in Annandale.

Mainhill approved, was overjoyed, saw the clouds beginning to lift, and the "kind mother" sang with new heart at her work. Carlyle was in the service of the Buller family for the next two-and-a-half years—from the early spring of 1822 until midsummer, 1824; in Edinburgh for sixteen months—until the end of May, 1823; at Kinnaird House for nine months, and the rest on holiday and in London. He was less at Mainhill, for he had become the first of friends, the suitor most encouraged, at Haddington. He spent one week at Mainhill at the commencement of his new work; another—"a joyful week"—in May, of this year. He was easily self-supporting now, gladly capable of helping others. No longer was the box, packed with victuals, and "the washing," as regular as the carrier himself. Mainhill had saved him in the period of dangerous storms, seen him through and into calm, sunny weather. The farm, the mother there, were not forgotten as the wealth of published letters attests.

Carlyle could afford improved lodgings, and migrated in Edinburgh to 3, Moray Street. Here, when autumn brought round the University session, his brother John joined him, and entered upon the curriculum in medicine at "Tom's" expense. Letters from Mainhill still came by the carrier, and the brothers in Edinburgh were foremost in the thoughtful affection of the family. The youngest sister was a girl of nine by this time. They all wrote in turn. "Wee Craw Jean"—Carlyle's second youngest sister with the raven hair, twelve years old now—who was clever and fond of books and

culture all her life as Mrs. Aitken, had been Carlyle's close companion when he was at Mainhill. She sent her "scrap of doggerel" as her message to "Tom." Carlyle continued his gifts to his mother, and to the other members of the family, his gratitude keeping pace with his new competence from the side of income. Murmur died at Mainhill. No thunderous growls about religion disturbed the serenity of the family life. "Tom" was above suspicion—a man now. The finished article was all the better for having been long in the making. "In spite of all my dyspepsias and nervousness and hypochondrias,"[1] he wrote to his mother, "I am still bent on being a very meritorious sort of character, rather noted in the world of letters, if it so please Providence, and useful, I hope, whithersoever I go, in the *good old* cause, for which I beg you to believe that I cordially agree with you in feeling my chief interest, however we may differ in our modes of expressing it." Such words of noble confession confirmed the peace at Mainhill.

From the end of May, 1823, to the middle of February, 1824—some nine months—Carlyle lived, as tutor, with the Bullers at Kinnaird House, in a picturesque glen near Dunkeld in the Highlands of Perthshire. In the August of 1823, he spent ten days at Mainhill, when, to his sorrow, "it rained every day." He was forced to decline an invitation to visit his friend Murray in Galloway, but was at Annan twice among old friends, and paid a visit to Dr. Duncan's manse at Ruthwell. He was twice at Bogside during this visit. Kinnaird was for Carlyle a lonesome, miserable habitation. So absorbed was he by things of the mind that nature on the river Tay appealed to him in vain. He was dyspeptic there, and journeyed to Edinburgh, when his affliction was at its worst, in order to consult Dr. Bell, who gave him mercury and "solemnly commanded" him to abstain from tobacco, even from snuff. He was sleepless, irritable, threatened to "kick over" his appointment, was at a loss to know what to do with his "unfortunate carcase," and contemplated turning farmer in partnership with "Alick." He invested in a riding pony on his own account, a grey Galloway called Bardolph, which he

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 178.

all the tackle put in order" for the "tea-shines," and the pipes which, Dr. Bell notwithstanding, were still the sweet ruin of Carlyle's "unfortunate carcase." Six happy, industrious weeks were spent at Mainhill. Carlyle had received £60 for *Schiller* in magazine parts—(he sold the book later for £100). He was rich now beyond the dreams of Mainhill avarice, and no summer sun ever before dawned so brightly on the little farm, nor had the larks ever before sung so gaily there. "Tom" was becoming a famous man after all. The passage on heroism in literature, which is still first-class reading in the introduction to Part II. of *Schiller*, where he calls Milton "the moral king of authors," had been quoted in *The Times*. It was the hour of conquest, of rejoicing, of thanksgiving, and of peace at James Carlyle's farm.

By the end of May, Carlyle was back in Edinburgh with the third book of *Meister* ready for his printer. He visited Jeannie Welsh at Haddington, spent a few happy days there, and sailed from Leith on his first entrance into London. There were no grumbles for the nonce. His heart was full. The future invited him with radiant promise. Yet were there clouds on the sky, which kept Mainhill anxious about "Tom" through all this first London period from June 1824 to March 1825. He "kicked over" the Buller tutorship as he had the pulpit and "the schoolmastering function." He visited Paris much to the alarm of his mother who dreaded the sea, and the French manners. Disgusted with literary life in London, Carlyle was seized with an imperious longing for the country, for some definite work in a natural, simple environment. His family needed help, and he was able to assist them to get rid of Mainhill. And so he returned to Annandale soon after *Schiller* was revised, published, paid for, in book form. He had received his first letter from Goethe acknowledging the receipt of his translation of *Meister*. He had walked erect as a literary man among the foremost poets and prose-writers of the time, none daring to make him afraid. He was treading on the skirts of fame; and he had dim foreshadowings of avenues to come by which he might speak some great, enduring, inspiring word in the ear of the world. Jean ("wee Craw Jean, or

wee Craw") met him from the coach at Ecclefechan, and "the kind mother" welcomed her "ribe of a boy" back to his native Annandale with all a mother's joy and pride.

Carlyle left a delightful glimpse of the life at Mainhill in his sketch of Edward Irving.[1] James Carlyle was a model farmer, believed in the systematic distribution of labour, and held each of the children responsible for a bit of work suited to his or her age. He made the most of the "wet, clayey spot" in bad times, but his stock was his fortune after eight years of hard struggle. His stock! —yes, and his family. Carlyle retreated upon Mainhill, he confessed, "for cheapness' sake and health's sake." It was at Mainhill, as the brothers and sisters passed into opening manhood and womanhood, that the singular cohesion which characterised James Carlyle's family was fully ripened. "Tom's" letters came to be for the bread of life there to his mother.[2] "Now, Tom," she wrote to him during the winter of 1824, "the best of boys thou art to me! . . . . Your father says I look as if I would eat your letters." All misgivings, all prejudices against independent criticism of Christianity, gave way under the pressure of conduct on "Tom's" part.[3] "Jack tells me you are reading *Meister*," he wrote to his mother at midsummer of 1824. "This surprises me. If I did not recollect your love for me, I should not be able to account for it." The satisfaction his mother found in *Meister* was for proof to him that Goethe's romance was essentially a wholesome book.

A period of three months separated Carlyle's return from London from the occupation of the second farm at Whitsunday. This was perhaps the most happy of all his visits to Mainhill. He visited Edinburgh again in this interval, and arranged with Tait, the publisher, for the translation of four volumes of *German Romance*. He had thus a year's work in front of him. The mine of German translation looked relatively inexhaustible, and he had hardly any competitors whose work counted in the market against his own.

[1] *Reminiscences*, Vol. I, p. 181.
[2] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 267.
[3] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 229.

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dinburgh, he declared that there were ten pages
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published since he had come into the world, he
within himself the old fond later life at Mainhill,
into the heart of the passage" with the remarkable
de by whom, before he knew a word of Goethe or
tongue, he had been taught the supreme lesson of
*hrfurcht*:—the soul of all religion that has ever been
or will be."

"Tom" was a hero at Mainhill, and hero-worship was in the air thereabouts. He was not formally engaged to Jeannie Welsh, but he had substantial hope in that quarter; indeed, she was committed to him, he was equally, even more so, committed to her. On returning from a visit to Haddington in the end of May, he had brought presents from Miss Welsh for the family. It was the first manifest hint that "Tom" had discovered what the Scottish peasants would call "his intended" in the Haddington young lady.[1] "Your little box I opened in the presence of many eager faces," he wrote to Jeannie Welsh; "your gifts were snatched with *lauter Jubelgeschrei:* I question if ever gifts were welcomed with truer thanks or gave more happiness to the receivers. All stood amazed at the elegance of their 'very grand' acquisitions, some praised in words the generous young *leddy* who had sent them, little Jenny flourished her green bag 'like an antique Maenad,' and for the whole evening was observed to be *a wee carried*, even when the first blush of the business was over. My mother was as proud (*purse*-proud) as any."

Jane Welsh is associated, also, with Mainhill through the two charming domestic incidents, which Froude chronicled as having occurred when she was first introduced to Carlyle's family. The "wee room down the house" was put at the service of the "bonny leddy," who was "Tom's intended." Miss Welsh observed there that Carlyle's sister Margaret, with the high-born self-respect, and the well-bred sense of the fitness of things, which were innate in the Carlyles, had covered the small, plain, deal table with a precious, new, coloured shawl, the gift of a friend to herself. James Carlyle, then an old man of sixty-seven, was called in from farm work to receive the visitor. The girls kissed "Tom's sweetheart," while the old man shrank back and disappeared, a puzzle to the keen glance of the daughter-in-law to be. He soon returned new-shaved, washed, and dressed in his best clothes. "Now," he remarked, "if Miss Welsh will allow it, I am in a condition to kiss her too."

We leave Mainhill reluctantly by the narrow, crooked path (the loaning) which connects the farm-house with the great north-road,

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 322.

and all the world. Every stone there, every bush and tree and field and scar is suffused with heroic memories, with high emotions, transmitted from James Carlyle's time, from the years that formed the real formative, determinative epoch in Thomas Carlyle's unique career. It was there the proud mother received her presentation copies of the first books for which "her best of boys" received commercial and other recognition as a scholar and man-of-letters—his *Life of Schiller*, and his translation of Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship and Travels*. "What a work!" exclaimed Carlyle of *Meister* in one of his Haddington letters: "bushels of dust and straws and feathers, with here and there a diamond of the purest water." The biggest diamond in *Meister* is the passage in the *Travels* in which the beautiful fantasy is elaborated of the 'Three Reverences': and the third volume, which comprehends the *Travels*, was translated at Mainhill in "the wee room down the house." Carlyle's version of the "Reverences" is more reverent, set to a loftier ethical key, than the original. When, in 1866, in his *Inaugural Address* as Lord Rector at Edinburgh, he declared that there were ten pages of the *Travels* which he would rather have written than have produced all the books published since he had come into the world, he must have recalled within himself the old fond later life at Mainhill, where he "read into the heart of the passage" with the remarkable mother at his side by whom, before he knew a word of Goethe or of the German tongue, he had been taught the supreme lesson of reverence—"*Ehrfurcht*:—the soul of all religion that has ever been among men, or will be."

## CHAPTER XVI

# Not London, but Annandale

ON the road from Mainhill to Ecclefechan, in the nearer west, the Tower of Repentance, rising gaunt and grim from the summit of the hill above Hoddom Castle, can be seen across the fertile, luxuriant, undulating holm. Within five hundred yards of this venerable Tower, on another wind-swept hill, where, like the eagle, he might dally with the wind and scorn the sun, Carlyle made the first of his two experiments in eccentricity by combining life on the farm with the cultivation of literature. This attractive height, which commands a wide survey of the Carlyle country, may be conveniently approached from the Ecclefechan side.

Passing the Board School and the entrance to the kirkyard, we enter the road on the right hand, which conducts us into an umbrageous avenue—one of "the kind beech-rows of Entepfuhl"—past the site of Carlyle's first school, where Tom Donaldson, the schoolmaster—"a down-bent, broken-hearted, underfoot martyr"—pronounced him "a genius, fit for the learned professions"; past also the site of the ancient church of Saint Fechan. Hoddom kirk stands near to the cross-roads between the village and the river Annan, presentable although nondescript in point of architecture, and surrounded by the kirkyard, which is crowded with the memorials of the local dead of many generations, whose friends, according to mysterious custom, have burdened them in death with tombstones that possess no qualities except weight. This isolated rural church, sitting in a soothing solitude, has no direct Carlylean associations about it. The meeting-house was Carlyle's church, when

he attended anywhere, at home in Annandale; but the Rev. Mr. Yorstoun was one of his friends. There is an interesting mural

HODDOM KIRK.

"The sound of the kirk-bell from Hoddom kirk was strangely touching, like the departing voice of eighteen hundred years."—*Carlyle.*

tablet in the vestibule, which is of Roman origin, and was used for an altar by the soldiers of the German cohort.

Hoddom kirkyard also is sufficiently "neglected" to qualify for an elegy by a second Gray. The graves are here of some of the worthies of Ecclefechan in James Carlyle's time. There is a small, commonplace, upright stone, near the eastern wall, which has been identified by his surviving descendants as the grave of Robert Brand—born 1725, died 1799. The pith of Carlyle's allusion, in the *Reminiscences*, to this devoted early Burgher-Seceder has been added recently to the original inscription. Brand was "an ancient herdsman," and James Carlyle's maternal uncle. He was "a rigorous religionist," a "man of iron firmness, a just man and of wise

insight."[1] "I think my father," writes Carlyle, "consciously and unconsciously, may have learnt more from him than from any other individual." On the spiritual side, we owe Thomas Carlyle to such men as Robert Brand, hearts "once pregnant with celestial fire," whose graves deserve to be kept green, men in hodden-gray who influenced the thought of the world, and knew it not.

GRAVE OF "OLD ROBERT BRAND."
Carlyle's Typical Burgher-Seceder.

Immediately behind the church, the grave of the Rev. James Yorstoun is located, the good minister who played chess with Jane Welsh at the manse. It is walled around with strange clumsiness, and half-hidden among shrubs and overgrowths of wild vegetation, as if the friends of this popular Moderate, who is certified on his tomb as having "faithfully discharged his duties" in the parish for half a century, meant to obstruct the progress of the resurrection! Near by is the mausoleum of the Sharpe family, proprietors of Hoddom in Carlyle's day, where much ponderosity of stone tells how General Matthew Sharpe died in 1845, and his poet-brother, Scott's correspondent and co-worker, Charles Kirkpatrick Sharpe, in 1851. The brothers Sharpe were all bachelors, and the family is now extinct, while the estate of Hoddom has passed into the family of Mr. Edward Brook. This mausoleum interests us because both the

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. I, p. 51.

Member of Parliament and the ballad-monger were buried there, in the tranquil heart of the lands they had owned, and honoured, and sung, within earshot almost of the river Annan, which still flows in quietude or noisome flood under Woodcockair, indifferent to all change in the *personnel* on its sylvan banks.

TOMB OF REV. JAMES YORSTOUN.

Among the cottages at the cross-roads here the sound of the blacksmith's hammer and anvil will be heard. Carlyle never forgot this smithy. It was here that his wild Irish horse, Larry, got the snaffle-bit in his teeth, galloped down a steep place, dislodged Carlyle from the saddle, trailing him "on the bare highway"—a lugubrious serio-comic mishap which put melancholy into one of the letters[1] of the courtship, and caused Jane Welsh to warn Carlyle's people of the danger of committing her husband-elect to the tender mercies of the "wild Irish horse" in his "fresh" moods.

The road on the right hand passes, within a short distance of the

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 235.

blacksmith's shop, the mansion and grounds of Knockhill. This house is curiously associated with Carlyle. In the Dumfries *Courier*, under date of 20th April, 1830—the weekly local newspaper Carlyle continuously read, sold then at sevenpence—a striking letter to the editor appeared, signed "Vox." Carlyle sent this letter down from Craigenputtock. A youth of the Ecclefechan district had been courting a maid-servant at Knockhill. He called one autumn night after dark, was discovered outside the house by the butler, challenged, pursued with a loaded gun, and shot dead on the spot. Six months had elapsed, yet nothing had been heard of any arrest or trial. "Interesting trials enough we have had," wrote Carlyle, "trials for attempting to shoot rabbits, for writing marriage-lines, for stealing a pair of breeches; but for the shedder of blood there was no trial." It was evidently suspected that the proprietor of Knockhill had succeeded in getting justice suspended, and that the butler had been acting under orders. "May any British subject," Carlyle asked, "the poorest cotter, keep his loaded gun for our rural Celadons, and shoot them with less ceremony than he dare do snipes? Or is it not only men possessing certain 'ploughgates' of land that enjoy such a privilege? If so, might not it be well that they were bound to take out some licence or game certificate first?" Carlyle disowned all personal interest in the affair, inasmuch as the parties involved were unknown to him, but he demanded, "in the name of God," that "all official courtesies and hole-and-corner work be far from us when man's blood was on the floor! Let the light in on it," he insisted, "the clear eye of public enquiry, or the spot will blacken there for ever." "Vox" gave a voice to "the muttered curses of a whole district" in vain.

At Hoddom bridge, which we must cross on the way to Repentance Hill, the riverscape is surpassingly beautiful, not unfit to be compared with Burns's "bonnie Doon." On the opposite bank of the river we are in the parish of Cummertrees, and the stately walls and towers of Hoddom Castle are seen to the right overlooking the river. After a short, stiff bit of climbing, we reach the Tower of Repentance on the summit of Repentance Hill, and are

walking in the fields of the small farm which Carlyle occupied from Whitsunday, 1825, to Whitsunday, 1826.

In the profound solitude of Kinnaird Castle Carlyle was disposed to conclude that London was his place, or that he was made for

KNOCKHILL.

residence "amid some great collection of men." In London in 1825–26, both the Scot abroad and John Bull at home turned his stomach, and he gravitated back to Annandale. He was by this time successfully introduced to literature. He had succeeded as a compiler and writer for Brewster's *Encyclopædia;* he had received recognition, direct, personal, conveyed in an autograph letter, from Goethe of the merit declared in his translation of *Meister*, and, with singular prescience, Goethe had remarked—"It may be that I shall yet hear much of you." He was the successful author of the *Life of Schiller*. He possessed a mine of which he had a monopoly, a lucrative scholar's asset, in his knowledge of the German language and

literature. London was infinite commonplace to Carlyle at that stage, although he did confess to having been touched by the majesty of architecture in St. Paul's Cathedral. The development thus through reaction, through the polarities of mood, was normal. He was not ready for London, nor London for him. If Carlyle had accepted the counsel of Irving, the Bullers, the Stracheys, Badams, and others, and settled in London in the spring of 1825, *Sartor* might never have been written, and Carlyle's totality of work and influence must have been greatly diminished. It took quite forty years in the wilderness to mature a Carlyle. He was helped, however, for his work at home in Annandale by the impressions brought back from London and Paris, from Birmingham and Oxford and Stratford-on-Avon.

The farm-house in which Carlyle spent the last year of his bachelorhood here was called (at least by the Carlyles) "Hoddam Hill." No such name can be traced in the books of the Hoddom estate. The place is known as Repentance Hill now, but the Carlyle farm has lost its separate identity and become part of the larger farm of West Trailtrow. What was the farm-house in Carlyle's time is now divided out into dwellings for the ploughmen. This little farm was to let in 1825. It belonged to General Sharpe, who was laird also of Mainhill. At "Tom's" instigation, and on his behalf mainly, Alick secured the farm at the rent of £100. It was taken in Alick's name, "for," said Carlyle, "I am but a lodger, and should make no figure in the character of one of Hoddom's tenants." These fresh plans were intended to prepare the way for ultimate exodus from "Mainhill and its plashy soil." Carlyle was worth £200 at least in cash at the bank. His savings had been kept low during the three years of the Buller tutorship, on account of his exceeding generosity to his brother John, who must have cost him something like £100 a year. Alick received a blank cheque on the Dumfries bank for whatever frugal expenditure might be necessary in order to stock the farm and furnish the dwelling-house. This farm-house, which had been built as a residence for the factor on the estate, was more commodious somewhat than Mainhill, yet

it was an inadequate home for a family of five grown-up people. We get a glimpse of the stuff Carlyle was made of, and of the strength in him of the passion for independence, by tracing closely his transition from the softer life with the Bullers, from the glitter of the drawing-rooms and dining-halls he had shone in for a brilliant new eccentric star, to this rude farm on Repentance Hill. "The eagle itself," he wrote at this time, "must gather sticks to build its nest, and in its highest soarings keep an eye upon its creeping prey." It was with Carlyle, then, a veritable return to nature. His heart leapt up, grumbling subsided temporarily, prevision and hope of improved health returned, as he looked here "from Hartfel to Helvellyn, from Criffel to the Crags of Christonberry"; while "a green, unmanufactured carpet covered all the circle of his vision, fleecy clouds and the azure vault were above him, and the pure breath of his native Solway blew wooingly through all his haunts."

HOUSE ON REPENTANCE HILL.
"My poor Tugurium."—*Carlyle.*

At Mainhill, in 1825, James Carlyle's family had outgrown the capacity of the three-roomed house. The youngest sister, Janet was twelve and the eldest, Margaret, twenty-two, whilst Alick was a man of twenty-eight, and James, also trained to farming, was twenty. It had become expedient to divide the household. Mainhill can be seen from the Tower of Repentance. The new farm was but three miles distant as the crow flies, five miles by the road through Ecclefechan and by way of Hoddom bridge. And so it was arranged, in all goodwill

and affection, that the mother and the two youngest sisters should accompany Alick and "Tom" to Repentance Hill, while the two elder sisters, Margaret and Mary, were to remain with the father and James at Mainhill. The peculiar migration was accomplished at the Scotch Whitsunday term in the last week of May. Carlyle possessed a comparatively small collection of books, for he had done most of his work in the shadow of the Edinburgh libraries, but he had with him the superb new writing-desk, which had cost £20, the gift of Mrs. Strachey, and he had a small accumulation of German books necessary for his work as translator.[1] "On Thursday," he wrote to Jane Welsh, "we split up our establishment here, and one division of us files away to Hoddam Hill. What a hurly-burly, what an anarchy and chaos! In less than forty days the deluge will abate, however; and the first olive branch (of peace and health) will show itself above the mud."

This temporary, provisional, makeshift settlement on Repentance Hill was contemporaneous with an important crisis-stage in Carlyle's thought-life, and not less with what was probably the supreme determinative factor of his subsequent outward career, viz. his indissoluble union with Jane Welsh. Looking round now upon what time has spared of the rude building, which he fondly described as "a good house," where he anticipated "comfortable quarters," we are deeply impressed by the contrast that emerges to reflection between the intellectual promise he had previously displayed, together with the recognition already then conceded to him, and the commonplace features of his self-chosen home. Crabbe Robinson, bachelor Mæcenas of his age, had written to him since he had "kicked London over"; he was on visiting terms with Sir William Hamilton, Scotland's pre-eminent philosopher; both the great in respect of rank and wealth, and the great in literature alone, were eager to serve him at his need; yet was he the bond-slave of independence; there was within him a prophet's message to mankind, struggling to express itself in adequate symbols, needing, imperiously demanding, solitude for its birthplace and wild nature for its

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 321.

nursery; and he does not seem to have experienced any reactionary wish to recover the opulent surroundings of the Buller years; rather was he contented to pursue his ideal on the footing of a peasant among the peasantry, delighted with the freedom and freshness of "his own four walls." Froude was uncertain whether Carlyle's verses entitled—"My Own Four Walls"—were composed at Repentance Hill, or at Craigenputtock. The internal evidence manifestly points to "the Crag of the Hawks" as the source of this particular inspiration, but one of the stanzas, rough and unmelodious though it be, exactly embodies Carlyle's mood, and suggests his attitude towards the great, struggling, wanton world he had left behind him in the south, when he "set up his books and bits of implements, and took to doing his stint of ten pages daily of German romance" on Repentance Hill:—

> "When fools or knaves do make a rout
> With gigmen, dinners, balls, cabals,
> I turn my back and shut them out:
> These are my own four walls."

The calm had arrived between two tempestuous periods. It was "a holy time—a *pax Dei*, which exhausted nature had conquered for herself from all the fiends that assaulted and beset her."[1]

[1] The foregoing chapter traverses the scene of Carlyle's "true tale" of "Cruthers and Jonson" (*Fraser's Magazine*, 1831—reprinted in *Centenary Edition*, Vol. V). Cruthers and Jonson were pupils at "the parish school-house of Hoddam": they were reconciled among "the bright glades and meadows of Knockhill," this estate being Jonson's patrimony: in the jail at Carlisle, Jonson wept when he thought of "the sunny braes of his native Annandale"; and after his return from Jamaica, Jonson "built a stately mansion (Knockhill) which still adorns the place."

## CHAPTER XVII

# On Repentance Hill

"THE ancient Tower of Repentance stands on a corner of the farm, a fit memorial for reflecting sinners." So wrote Carlyle to Jane Welsh after he had returned from London to Mainhill, and visited the farm on Repentance Hill, in this spring of 1825. The remark implied no self-accusation: he had little to confess, or to repent of, and, at the worst, had been guilty of Border rage and excesses in tobacco alone. Yet genius for Carlyle meant sensibility, abnormal in extent, often morbid. Even in 1825, at the age of thirty, he stood before his own upbraiding conscience self-condemned, in anguish, full of painful reflections upon the ineffectual uses to which hitherto he had devoted time and his virile energies. "Close by is the Tower of Repentance," he remarks in *Reminiscences*, "as if symbolically!"

The farm on Repentance Hill stood higher than Mainhill, and commanded the country, on all sides round, in clear weather, for some fifty miles. Looking towards Annan and the Solway, the view is much the same as[1] that from Landheads. "From the windows," says Carlyle, "there is such a view as Britain or the world could hardly have matched." On the Ecclefechan side, the fertile and luxuriant dale, watered by the Annan and its tributary streams, stretches towards the lower slopes of Birrenswark, the two unbrageous avenues of beech-trees connecting the river's bank with the human element in the old village, while the woods, gardens, cultivated landscape, around Hoddom Castle lie immediately below. In his an-

[1] *Ante*, p. 52.

notations to the Jane Welsh *Letters*, Carlyle describes the surrounding country in language which, when tested on the spot, shows no exaggeration[1]:—"For the rest it had the finest and vastest prospect all round it I ever saw from any house: from Tyndale Fell to St. Bees Head, all Cumberland as in amphitheatre unmatchable; Galloway mountains, Moffat mountains, Selkirk ditto, Roxburgh ditto:—nowise indifferent ever to me, in spite of the prevailing cant on such matters, which always are subordinate extremely, and never supreme or near it."

TOWER OF REPENTANCE.
"Fit memorial for reflecting sinners."—*Carlyle.*

The Tower of Repentance, in whose shadow on the hill-top Carlyle, at this stage, found it good to halt, has a romantic history. It was the theme of a ballad which Kirkpatrick Sharpe, younger son in the then Hoddom family, author, also, of the pathetic ballad of—"The Murder of Caerlaverock"—contributed to Scott's Minstrelsy of the Scottish Border; and its traditions have been carefully examined from the antiquarian point of view by Dr. Neilson, whose pamphlet concerning the old tower affords a reasonable solution of the historical problem of its origin and primary utilities. The tower itself stands 350 feet above the sea-level. It is a plain structure, built of the local red-freestone, which time has caused to look grey, and measures 23 feet by 21 feet 6 inches

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. I, p. 6.

—almost square, and about the same height from its rock foundations. Above the solitary small door it possesses, which opened originally into a stair leading towards the roof on which the watchman stood, or the beacon-signal kept blazing, or the bell rung which called to arms the feudal retainers of the Maxwells out of their hovels on the hillsides around, the word "Repentence"—"e" for "a"—is carved in the stone, and under it the figures of the serpent and the dove may be traced, rude emblems here of remorse and grace. The tower is surrounded by a small graveyard, walled in, which contains the mausoleum of the ancient local family of Murray of Murraythwaite.

The tradition which Kirkpatrick Sharpe sung is the popular version still of the origin of this strange tower. John Maxwell, Lord Herries, Warden of the West March, by whom the tower was built in the second half of the sixteenth century, was caught in a dangerous storm when crossing the Solway, on his return from a raid into England, and, in order to lighten his boat's load, cut the throats of his English prisoners, and cast their bodies into the sea, afterwards erecting the tower, for patriotic local uses, as a confession of remorse, as evidence of repentance.

"He sat him on Repentance Hicht
And glower'd upon the sea."

. . . . . .

"Repentance signal of my bale,
Built of the lasting stane,
Ye lang shall tell my bluidy tale,
When I am deid and gane."

There is no fireplace in the interior of the tower, nor any other signs of residence. The hill was one of the ancient beacon heights of Annandale.

There is a softer tradition to the effect that the same Lord Herries destroyed a church thereabouts, and used the stones when building Hoddom Castle, erecting the tower subsequently from a motive of repentance for this deed of sacrilege. According to Dr. Neilson's pamphlet, however, this Lord Herries built the old tower in a mood

Chas. Kirkpatrick Sharpe

of repentance for the crime of occasioning the slaughter by the English of fourteen of his kinsmen, whom he had given for hostages to the English Warden that he would meet the latter at Dumfries. This he failed to do, and his hostages were slain. His remorse assumed the practical and patriotic form of a beacon-tower which might be useful in his country's defence. If this be the true origin of it, this curious remnant of Border warfare, standing here solitary, grim, inartistic, perpetuates in rude symbolism a sufficiently "bluidy tale" to warrant monumental repentance.

Carlyle's house stood nearly as high as the tower, and was little sheltered from the winds. Yet he was exceptionally contented on this singular hill-top. He has written in a more kindly and grateful tone of it than of any other residence in Scotland, probably because he had come and gone inside a single year. The mixed life of peasant farming and literature suited his moods and whims at the time. It was a sort of Brook Farm experiment on individualistic Carlylean lines. His mother was housekeeper. She "smoked diligently" there, and sacredly observed the custom, which had been instituted at Mainhill, of taking her afternoon cup of tea privately with "Tom." He could claim two small reserved apartments for his own uses. The mother, the sisters, and Alick, would do anything to please him, "cook turpentine" for his "unfortunate carcase," if he so desired! Alick was assisted by "a cheap little man-servant," and his mother by a maid-servant. The whole establishment discovered an improvement upon the severities of Mainhill. The "poor *Tugurium*" was by no means a despicable home for the peasant scholar. He rode daily on the back of Larry; sometimes helped Alick in the fields; visited Graham of Burnswark, or "honest Gavin of Bogside," who was Irving's cousin, or the genial minister of Hoddom; and kept pegging away at his proper literary work of translating the four volumes of *German Romance.* London was half-forgotten, and no letters to the friends he had made in the south have been preserved. He enjoyed freedom; the independence which to him was ever dear as the breath of life; and was probably never so happy. "What my pious joy and gratitude then

was," he writes, "let the pious soul figure." His brother John, whom he continued to educate for medicine, spent the vacation with him, and studied botany in the Annandale glens.

"No wonder I call that year idyllic," writes Carlyle, "in spite of its russet coat." The idyllic element in his career was taking shape

HODDOM CASTLE.

then, for his courtship was fast ripening towards marriage. The supreme event of the year was the visit of Jane Welsh in the autumn. She was a stranger to the family, needing to be introduced in person, although known remotely through her gifts, and the recipient, in "Tom's" letters, of the mother's "kindest compliments." Some weeks previously to the great visit, Carlyle informed Miss Welsh that his sister Jane was sewing the initials "J. W." in a "sampler." Carlyle had asked what the initials stood for? who was this "J. W."? With a look of "timorous archness," "wee Craw Jean" answered—"It's no a *he* ava!"

Jane Welsh, whose home was still with her widowed mother in Haddington, was visiting this summer at Templand and in Dumfries. She had promised to visit the Carlyles on Repentance Hill. No plans with a view to matrimonial settlement were as yet matured or determined. The coach from Dumfries passed Kelhead—a cluster of cottages near to a lime-kiln on the higher Annan-Dumfries road two miles below and on the fringe of Kinmount woods—and Carlyle met her there, with two riding horses, on Thursday, 1st September. The visit lasted for nine halcyon days. No hitch occurred. Her deference was queenly, for her concern was not what she might think of them, but how they might like her. Jane Welsh was a lady by patent of nature, incapable of putting on superficial and repellent airs.

In the distance, she had figured as awesome and unapproachable to the Carlyles, and all best things were prepared for her reception. The kindly, thoughtful, sportive, noble Jeannie at once put the mother, and the two sisters, at ease in her presence. "Her demeanour among us," writes Carlyle, "I could define as unsurpassable, spontaneously perfect." In bright September weather, Carlyle and Miss Welsh rode together through all nature's haunts of interest and beauty in Annandale, "melodious talk never wanting." He introduced her to his select local friends, especially to his new friends, to whom he had been introduced by the Laird of Burnswark, the Johnstons at the Grange, a small estate ten miles distant, lying towards Moffat "among the sleek sheep hills." Miss Welsh was spontaneously and cordially liked by Carlyle's family, and this for the sake of her personal qualities. Through all the vicissitudes of the subsequent married life, never a ripple came between the loves of Carlyle's people and "Tom's" charming wife. The time was now past and nigh forgotten when she had dared to confess that she loved Carlyle, but was not in love with him. She could not live without him now, and of the two Miss Welsh, after this visit, was the more eager to precipitate the closer companionship promised by marriage.

Carlyle wrote an elaborate explanatory preface[1] to Jane Welsh's first letter to his mother, intimating the day of her arrival. In the

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. I, p. 8.

last paragraph of this pathetic note, composed more than forty years afterwards, when "Jeannie" was dead, he says:—"As I rode with her to Dumfries, she did not attempt to conceal her sorrow;—and indeed our prospect ahead was cloudy enough. I could only say, *espérons, espérons.*" Froude[1] deleted the words "to Dumfries" from the above sentence, and printed the passage as if it imported that Jane Welsh throughout her visit of nine days, riding here and there with Carlyle, "did not attempt to conceal her sorrow." She was leaving the Carlyles, and it was the sorrow of parting which she "did not attempt to conceal."

This visit remained in Carlyle's memory as a green sunny island in the tempestuous seas of his early struggle, and in his retrospect after his wife's death it looked out "clear, peaceful, mournfully beautiful, blessed, and as if sacred!" Five days before her arrival at the farm, Jane Welsh had addressed Carlyle's mother, in her letter, in the customary form of remote conventional greeting, as "My dear Madam"; a month afterwards the greeting had changed to—"My dear Mrs. Carlyle." Although distinctly committed to Carlyle, Miss Welsh did not write to his people as if marriage must be the inevitable ultimate. When about to leave Templand for Haddington in October, she wrote to Carlyle's mother thus: "God bless you all; I am going far from you, and who knows when we shall meet again? But wherever I go, I shall never cease to remember dear Annandale and the friends I have left behind with so much regret." The temporalities were unpropitious; Mrs. Welsh was opposed to marriage on grounds of common prudence and through an imperfect sympathy with Carlyle, which was due to limited acquaintance and defective insight. "*Espérons, espérons,*" was Carlyle's encouragement and consolation, although he was prepared to release her, if she so desired, if her mind still wavered; ready "with alacrity" to slay himself, on the side of his feelings, in order "to forward *her* happiness." Her heart was in Annandale, with Carlyle, among his people, for good, and she wrote from Edinburgh to Carlyle's mother in November,

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 310.

declaring how all "the fine entertainments" of the city failed to give her the happiness which she had experienced during "the calm days" spent under the humble roof on Repentance Hill. This visit quickened the pace in the march of events which culminated thirteen months later in the marriage at Templand.

The monotony of Carlyle's life on this hill-top was broken by a visit which Irving made to Annan from London, when strange visions of a new Apostolic mission were beginning to turn Irving's head. Carlyle rode down to Annan to spend the day with the friend to whom he was so extensively indebted, his "thoughts sadly contrasting Irving's beautiful affectionate safety in Annan, and the wild tempestuous hostilities and perils beyond." It was hard for Carlyle to keep serious when Irving bestowed his "blessing" upon each of his friends by name. Irving, so he wrote to Johnstone, was "of green hue, sad, and in bad bodily condition." He was beyond Carlyle's help, walking on the precipice above a roaring gulf destined to destroy him, and knew nothing of his danger, nor could be warned.

The descent of the winter caused Carlyle's grumbling moods to return upon him, for the russet coat remained, but the idyllic element vanished. The "solitude on the hill-top that might content a Zimmerman" was ceasing to content a Thomas Carlyle. His brother John, whom he was still assisting with money, returned to Edinburgh to graduate in medicine, and to him Carlyle, with his honest and contrite brother's heart, placed himself in the confessional :[1]—"Continue to trust me, my good Jack," he wrote on 1st December, "as of old; for though distempers and the most despicable distresses make me choleric and frequently unreasonable, I love you truly, and have no dearer wish than to see you prospering beside me. I lament to think that my power of aiding you should be so limited." Jane Welsh, with the advance of the weeks, could no longer represent herself, with delicate diplomacy, even to Carlyle's mother, as having but "a sister's interest" in him; for he wrote to her in the middle of December, with affectionate humour, as his "fair guardian saint, his kind, hot-tempered angel, his beloved scolding wife."

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 333.

The opening weeks of 1826 found Carlyle visiting Edinburgh—and Haddington—and looking back wistfully to Repentance Hill, "figuring his mother out there as smoking diligently and wondering how *that poor habbletree* (lank one) *was fenning* (making *shift*) *ava.*" He had got out of books, wished to consult the Edinburgh libraries, and was needed there in connection with the printing of the first volume of *German Romance.* Anxious to secure some fit home for Jane Welsh, he grew enamoured for a few days of a proposal to establish a literary newspaper in Edinburgh, with the assistance of Brewster, Tait the bookseller, and Lockhart, and with himself for editor. The times were adverse: the Ballantyne-Scott failure damped down all fires of enterprise; and nothing came of the literary newspaper project.

After his return from this visit to Edinburgh, Carlyle got restless on Repentance Hill. He could now see the beginning of the end of his contract for the four volumes of *German Romance.* Fresh enterprise was imperative. This inward uneasiness probably made him "gey ill to deal wi'" in the matter of the lease. There had been some misconception all along regarding the actual conditions of the tenancy of the farm, especially as to the claims of the outgoing tenant upon his successor, or upon the landlord. His father and Alick had trusted to oral arrangements overmuch, and failed to secure the written bond. Carlyle threw himself into the fray with all his disengaged impetuosity. He had wrangled seriously with General Sharpe at the door of the farm-house, and given the laird an illustration of the thunder and lightning which could be produced by the powers of culture playing upon the Border genius. His father and he were agreed as to the justice of the case. The quarrel waxed hot, and passed into local history. Consequently, the lease terminated by common consent at the close of Carlyle's first year; and the prudential problem was solved for the family when James Carlyle simultaneously secured from a different proprietor a lease of the larger farm of Scotsbrig. The Mainhill lease was expiring at this Whitsunday also (1826), and the end of May saw both "divisions" removed to Scotsbrig.

On this hill-top must the student of Carlyle linger fondly. The year on Repentance Hill was contemporaneous with the final determination of Carlyle's positive philosophy of religion.[1] "This year," he relates in *Reminiscences*, "I found that I had conquered all my scepticisms, agonising doubtings, fearful wrestlings with the foul and vile and soul-murdering Mud-gods of my epoch; had escaped as from a worse than Tartarus, with all its Phlegethons and Stygian quagmires, and was emerging free in spirit into the eternal blue of ether, where, blessed be heaven! I have for the spiritual part ever since lived," etc. It was here he grew fully conscious of his peculiar emancipation on the side of the mind, of his independence of the world. The sound of the bell from Hoddom kirk on Sundays grew "strangely touching to *him*, like the departing voice of eighteen centuries." If he had outgrown the faith of the Burgher-Seceders, he had found an anchorage of positive belief in its room, and could sincerely assure his mother that, in religion, he and she, although employing different language and approaching the subject from contrasted points of view, at bottom meant the same thing. The Divine Idea of the Universe had unfolded itself to him. He perceived the Good as Supreme Being—the Good as the only verbal adumbration of the Nameless Infinite accessible to the finite mind. The nearest duty was to him for the voice of God. Virtue might suffer, and vice career triumphantly through the earth, but the Soul of the Universe was just, and the dastard invariably had "evil to boot." From the prolonged nightmare agony of doubt the *non*-personal philosophy of Goethe had given him the hint which set his mind free and in a large place. German thought, German ethics, the German poetical and Pantheistic interpretation of the Universe, had been to Carlyle the medium of "God's infinite mercy," and, in that year on Repentance Hill, his "conversion" was fully accomplished.[2] "I then felt, and still feel, endlessly indebted to Goethe in the business. He, in his fashion, I perceived, had travelled the steep rocky road before me, the first of the moderns."

On leaving London for Annandale in March, 1825, Carlyle

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. I, p. 287. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 288.

declined to be one of "the mob of gentlemen that write with ease." His theory of the slow, painful birth in confusion, in storm and darkness, of the world's masterpieces, came out of his own life. There was a great book slowly taking shape within him on this hill-top—a work of thought laboriously shaped into art. In the late autumn of 1825, he told Jane Welsh that he was "busily meditating some scheme of a *Kunstwerk* of his own." He was not conscious of any suggestion of *Sartor* until a later period, but, in the regions of his sub-conscious intellectual life, *Sartor* was then being conceived. The "Sorrows of Teufelsdröckh" were then ended. He had passed the dangerous gulf of "the Everlasting No"; and through "the Centre of Indifference." On Repentance Hill, he was cast "into a healing sleep; the heavy dreams rolled gradually away, and *he* awoke to a new Heaven and a new Earth."

It is therefore to this idyllic season on Repentance Hill, and not to the first years at Craigenputtock, that the stage-scenery of the chapter in *Sartor*, entitled "the Everlasting Yea," must be referred. The book was written *at* Craigenputtock, but the "Crag of the Hawks" enters little into the text, for Carlyle's prose, like Wordsworth's poetry, was "emotion recollected in tranquillity." This hill-top stands for "the high tableland on which the pilgrim-staff lies cast aside." And it is to this Mount of Vision, capped by the venerable Tower of Repentance, that the following great passage in *Sartor*, which gives to puzzling abstract thought the relief of powerful scenic effects, belongs[1]:—"Beautiful it was to sit there, as in my skyey tent, musing and meditating; on the high tableland, in front of the Mountains; over me, as roof, the azure Dome, and around me, for walls, four azure flowing curtains,—namely, of the Four azure Winds, on whose bottom-fringes also I have seen gilding," &c. With a little knowledge of local geography, it is here easy to count the "nine towns and villages that lay round the mountain-seat," and even to see in clear weather, the blue pillars of smoke, proclaiming their human vitality. It was on this hill-top that Carlyle awoke mentally to the perception, which in *Sartor* grew articulate in these

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. IX.

# CHAPTER XVIII

## Removal to Scotsbrig

on Repentance Hill strengthened Carlyle's attachment . It had been "the hottest and droughtiest" summer remember (1825), hardly any rain having fallen from he middle of August. The winter was mild. Carlyle was d by bad weather out of his daily tonic and recreation dle. The sum-total of the year's grumblings was reduced low the Carlylean average. The domestic arrangement the family had been separated, in "two divisions," the one nhill, the other at Repentance Hill, had worked successfully; e task of translating *German Romance* was "the pleasantest that he had so far undertaken, because it exacted no original, ve effort, nor was it dependent upon moods of emotion or ical states, but could be accomplished in all varying conditions a piece of mechanical journeyman labour, at a prescribed number pages each day.

At the best, however, this residence was a makeshift. On Repentance Hill, Carlyle was not to have any "continuing city." The removal with the close of the first year was regrettable only because accompanied by the quarrel with the laird of Hoddom. General Sharpe was popular in the county, so much so that he subsequently represented the Dumfries Burghs in Parliament from 1832 to 1841. Carlyle could not allow him to "ride over the belly of justice"; and, in the interview at the door of Carlyle's "poor Tugurium," he had made "Honour" sink, "in little more than a minute, from 212° of Fahrenheit's thermometer to 32°, and retire even below the freezing

point." James Carlyle's reputation was established and invulnerable. He could survive the quarrel. So soon as the lease of Scotsbrig was secured, the family trouble ended. "Our rural Ali Pacha" had "persecuted" them for their good. All plans were arranged for removal to Scotsbrig at Whitsunday, 1826. The quarrel must have increased the public respect in Annandale for James Carlyle, who conquered by obtaining the lease of Scotsbrig. His victorious independence stood apart, and shone like a brilliant star above the obsequious world.

The farm of Scotsbrig is the property of the Hoggan family, of Waterside, in Nithsdale, and is situate in the centre of the old parish of Middlebie, on the lower slopes of the hills, south-east from Ecclefechan, that separate Annandale from Eskdale. It lay beyond the jurisdiction and influence of "our rural Ali Pacha." Not that there is any evidence of vindictive procedure on the part of General Sharpe towards the Carlyles, who were clearly misled by the passion of the hour into the use of the word "persecute" in connection with the quarrel and its sequel. The capture of Scotsbrig, in the circumstances and in view of the keen competition for the farm, was described by Carlyle, in a letter to his brother, Dr. John, as[1] "great business in mighty waters." The rent was £190 *per annum*—a mixed farm of 220 acres. Complete repairs were to be effected in the "excellent shell of a house." Carlyle's mother rejoiced in the abundance of "peats," and the improved water supply. The local public verdict was in favour of Scotsbrig as "the best farm in Middlebie parish." The venerable father—sixty-eight now—had "renewed his youth even as the eagle's age." The two "divisions" were happily re-united at Scotsbrig.

From Repentance Hill to Scotsbrig, by way of Hoddom Bridge to Ecclefechan, and out upon the hillside beyond, among the storied dells of Middlebie, is a journey of exceeding interest to the student of Carlyle. By joining the main road going south at Ecclefechan, and following a circuitous route to Scotsbrig by Kirtlebridge Station the Carlylean associations here may be overtaken with advantage.

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 346.

In his pathetic setting of the contrast between the bright beginnings and the tragic close of Edward Irving's career, Carlyle describes, with permanent local colour applied in broad masses, the features of Annandale and its people as they may be discovered on this journey across the fertile hollow from Repentance Hill to Scotsbrig:[1] "rustic Annandale, with its homely honesties, rough vernacularities, safe, innocently kind, ruggedly motherlike, cheery, wholesome, like its airy hills and clear-rushing streams." Froude pertinently remarked that Carlyle's "exquisite little sketches" were like pictures of the old masters; they placed "not merely a natural scene before you, but the soul of the man who looked upon it." The soul of Carlyle was in its native, its most comfortable, element among these heights and howes of Annandale.

TOMB OF CARLYLE'S ANCESTORS IN PENNERSAUGHS GRAVEYARD.

At the foot of the village, we pass, on the right-hand side, Cresswell House. Not the same handsome building, but an earlier one on the same site, was erected by James Carlyle in the year when his income as stonemason amounted to the princely sum of £100! On the other side of the road, we soon reach the entrance to the mansion and grounds of Burnfoot; and, after the bridge at Mein Water is crossed, where the road begins to rise, we come suddenly upon the ancient kirkyard of Pennersaughs. One may

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol I, p. 335.

stumble upon a kirkyard anywhere in the Carlyle country. Here the "God's Acre" is immediately by the side of the road on the left hand; and it overlooks the steep, wooded bank of the Mein on the Burnfoot side. In old times, the graveyard ghosts might easily have retaliated upon the stage-coach, as it lumbered along this great highway between north and south, for the offence of disturbing, twice in the twenty-four hours, the natural tranquillity of the tombs. On the side remote from the road, in the shade of the trees growing on the banks of the Mein, the grave of Carlyle's ancestors is located. The gravestone is a large, carefully hewn, raised-horizontal stone, which the "three striking masons" placed there to the memory of their hardy forefathers. The inscription upon it reads thus:—"Here lyes John Carlyle who died in Burrance March the 11th, 1727, aged 40 years. Also, Thomas Carlyle, his son, who died at Ecclefechan, Jany. 10th, 1806, aged 84 years, and Mary Gillespie, his spouse, who died in same place, Jany. 10th, 1797, aged 70 years.—John Carlyle, mason in Ecclefechan, their son, who died Oct. 12th, 1801, aged 47 years. Also, Thomas Carlyle, son to the above Thomas Carlyle, who died at Mainhill, 9th June, 1816, aged 40 years."

These names take us back to the great-grandfather, the grandfather and grandmother, and two of the uncles on the paternal side, of Thomas Carlyle. It is interesting to note that the sage died at almost the same age—84—which his grandfather, "Old Tom of Brownknowe," had reached at his death.

The mystery of death seems sacred in this haunt of the well-remembered dead, above the constant murmur of the Mein Water. As I left the ancient kirkyard, where grass, weeds, thistles have their way unchecked, the sun was setting behind the Galloway hills to the west, and all the sky, beyond Ecclefechan, was radiant with light coloured in crimson and gold, falling softly upon all the vales and hills around. Yonder, at the village, Carlyle, in common with all his ancestors, was sleeping silent in this radiant glory, his life of "sturt and strife" long since ended; but the same sunsets remained which he had worked from recollections of childhood into his great *Kunstwerk* of *Sartor Resartus;* for I was then passing

through one of the[1] "glorious summer twilights" which fell upon "Entepfuhl" in Carlyle's youth there, "when the Sun like a proud Conqueror and Imperial Taskmaster turned his back, with his gold-purple emblazonry, and all his fire-clad body-guard (of Prismatic Colours); and the tired brickmakers of this clay Earth might steal a little frolic, and those few meek Stars would not tell of them."

Kirtlebridge Station is about a mile ahead, where, after 1850, Carlyle was accustomed to arrive when about to visit at Scotsbrig. At a short distance on the Ecclefechan side of this little rural junction, the road for Middlebie and Scotsbrig strikes off the main road, on the left-hand side as we are going; crosses the railway, and, turning to the left again, conducts us through some rich arable land down into the hollow where the Mein Water is joined by the Middlebie Burn; crosses the Mein, and traverses the hillside in front, keeping the picturesque Middlebie Glen to the right. Above the Mein Water, this road passes the Roman winter camp of Birrens; and, although no house, no land, no site can now be specifically located as having been the home and property of Carlyle's ancestors, it was hereabouts that Carlyle's great-grandfather was evicted by the Duke of Queensberry.

The new cemetery on the hill here declares the importance of Middlebie parish; so, too, the church and manse which soon come in sight. A row of cottages, on the left-hand side of the road, with "the smithy" in the centre, is all that survives of the village, which, in the early part of the eighteenth century, took precedence of Annan. Here, in those days, the Presbytery of Annandale met. The earlier local industries of weaving, straw-hat-making, etc., have long vanished; the heath-thatched cottages followed; and the "smithy" is the only conspicuous centre of trade now in the village to which Carlyle's grand-uncle Frank, the old sailor, "the Captain of Middlebie," returned, as a pensioner, to fight his naval battles over again by the cottage fireside in peace.

In the eighteenth century, the father of Dr. Currie, the earliest

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. II.

biographer of Burns, was minister of Middlebie. Born in his father's former manse at Kirkpatrick-Fleming, Dr. Currie—a name that has hitherto received scant justice in Scottish literature—was reared and taught in this comfortable manse. In this Middlebie kirk, Carlyle was "proclaimed" ("cried" in the vernacular). Ten days before his marriage, he informed Jane Welsh in solemn humour—that he had "ordered the Proclaiming of Banns in this parish of Middlebie, and written out a note giving order for it in *her* parish of Closeburn" —Templand is in Closeburn parish. This was legal custom in Scotland in the times when the kirk had a monopoly of "the cries," and candidates for matrimonial bondage had not, as now, the option of public notice by exposure on the board of the local registrar. "Proclaiming the Banns" is mostly done by the minister on entering the pulpit, a custom which secures punctuality, especially from the women. It is sometimes the duty of the Session-Clerk, sometimes of the leader of psalmody, who may be Session-Clerk as well. At Middlebie, in 1826, the "cries" were executed by one Archibald Blacklock, who was locally celebrated for his stentorian lungs.[1] "One would think," wrote Carlyle to Jane Welsh, "that after fair 'crying' three times through the organs of Archibald Blacklock, this certificate of celibacy would be like gilding refined gold, or adding a perfume to the violet; for would not my existing wife, in case I had one, forthwith, at the first hum from Archibald's windpipe, start up in her place and state aloud that *she* had 'objections'?" The Closeburn Session, in accordance with a procedure now long obsolete, had demanded a certificate of celibacy from Carlyle, in the handwriting of his parish minister, much to Carlyle's annoyance, who had galloped, in this quest, all the way from Scotsbrig to Hoddom manse, found Mr. Yorstoun from home there, and been obliged to crucify his *amour propre* and seek the certificate, at this manse of Middlebie, from "the glass minister," who could not have known the Carlyles as parishioners and neighbours of the Dissenting persuasion for more than four months.

In Carlyle's repertory of Annandale anecdotes, which he was fond

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 364.

to repeat when in his best mood, and followed by his characteristic loud, genial, merry laugh at things which impressed him as humorous —a laugh Froude apparently never heard, or remembered to forget— there was a ludicrous association with Middlebie kirk. The minister, or a strange clergyman in the pulpit, had announced for his text the words:—"He that is unholy, let him be unholy still." He could not remember any more, the opening sentences of the sermon having vanished clean out of his head, and was unable to get beyond repeating the text many times in a tone of nervous alarm. One of the local lairds, who was present, had listened to the amusing performance with impatience; and, just as the minister had reached the second "unholy" in the process of continuous repetition, this gentleman "started up, squeezed on his hat, and stalked gruffly along the passage, muttering:—'He that is a confounded jackass, let him be a jackass still.'" Carlyle remarked that there was "much truth in that prayer, much good sense."[1]

From the door of "the smithy" in this abridged modern edition of Middlebie village, the manse is seen directly across the little hill-side stream; and, on the high ground beyond, two farm-houses appear, within a stone's throw of each other, the one to the right being Carlyle's Scotsbrig. Passing the cross-roads above the village, where to the left-hand the direct road to Ecclefechan—two miles as against the five we have travelled—emerges, we reach the farm by winding round the fields, keeping continuously to the right, and crossing the Middlebie Burn, which divides the two farms that looked almost as one in the distance. The glen quite near to the house is exceedingly pretty in its way, abounding in pools and cascades, surrounded by rocks that are covered with verdure and the bloom of wild-flowers, and attaining almost to the picturesque at the "linn," which can make loud music of its own when the brown torrent rushes down from the moors, and is lashed into foam among the obstructing crags. Entering the farmyard of Scotsbrig, we observe at once that the "out-houses" are extensive, indicating a distinct advance in farming upon Mainhill and Repentance Hill.

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 248.

Here the two "divisions" came together again, in the sprightly mood of peasant conquerors, at that memorable Whitsunday of 1826. By the direct road they had five miles to travel from Mainhill, much the same from Repentance Hill, while, as we have come, fully eight miles have been covered. Alick had described the dwelling-house as "an excellent shell of a house." It has been enlarged slightly in the long interval, but is substantially the same building. The tenant is not now related to the Carlyles, albeit he is a typical Annandale farmer, shrewd, intelligent, caustic, who related to me, with keen relish of its home-spun humour, the story of the incompetent alien shearer, who was discharged in harvest by the Carlyles by being told curtly all his defects, and ordered to "sklent the bog with his ashbucket feet"; in more intelligible language, to disappear at once! It is a two-storied house, with three apartments on the ground floor and three above. The large room upstairs, with the gable window, was the best room. It was to it Carlyle referred when he remarked in a letter to John Sterling, in 1837, from Scotsbrig:—"I look on the sapphire of St. Bees Head, and the Solway mirror, from the gable window." The small, intermediate apartment upstairs is sacred to the memory of "the kind mother"; for it was occupied by her during her long widowhood from 1832 to 1853, after she was unable to take her turn in the byre, or with the reaping-hook in the harvest field. Here she smoked her pipe, and drank tea, and laughed at her

SCOTSBRIG.
"I look on the sapphire of St. Bees Head, and the Solway mirror, from the gable window."—*Carlyle.*

[1] "ould Grouse in the gunroom," and sang her favourite quaint Border ballads, and wept over the misfortunes of her neighbours, with "Tom," when he visited her periodically from London; a great man then to all the world; to her, and to himself, the Annandale peasant fundamentally unchanged. It was from her that Carlyle had derived what Emerson called "his mighty heart." She had much feeling for all suffering creatures, a great love for man, and bird, and beast. On stormy nights, she was not to be comforted unless assured that the cattle and sheep were sheltered from the blast. The soul of poetry lived in her, and, after the manner of Burns, she "thought *her* on the ourie (shivering) cattle" when winter's war of winds raged around, or wondered anxiously what might have befallen in the tempest "ilk happing bird, wee, helpless thing":—

"What comes o' thee?
Whare wilt thou cow'r thy chittering wing
An' close thy e'e?"

All the farms associated with Carlyle in the Carlyle country are on the heights. In common with Mainhill and Repentance Hill, Scotsbrig occupies an exposed situation on the wind-swept hillside, but sheltered to some extent by the moors behind, and by the trees on the banks of the Middlebie Burn. At the removal, Carlyle laid aside his pen, and "did a week's joinering": an experience which was helpful to his digestion, and worked wonders below the diaphragm. He could inform Dr. John that they had all "got over with whole bones." From the mother down, every soul of them was much in love with the new farm. The younger children were delighted with the "linn," or waterfall, with its crags and bushes; also, with the "fairy knowe" on the way to the moors. The mother was proud of her "peats"; of the proximity of the burn; grateful for escape from "reek," and from the pestering "Honour"—the

[1] Diggory in *She Stoops to Conquer*:—

"Then ecod your worship must not tell the story of Ould Grouse in the gunroom: I can't help laughing at that—he! he! he!—for the soul of me. We have laughed at that these twenty years—ha! ha! ha!"

satirical name General Sharpe had received in the family. The father surveyed with pride his eighteen acres of the best barley in the district, and Alick had visions of unlimited bog-hay with which to fatten stock for the market. Altogether, the domestic conditions had been distinctly improved, and Carlyle, in his jesting way, could wish "long life to his Honour"—that is, to General Sharpe.

Here at Scotsbrig, in this summer and autumn of 1826, Carlyle completed his translation of the four volumes of *German Romance* for Tait, the Edinburgh publisher. In his routine of duties, the courtship correspondence, also, bulked large. As the summer advanced, all was seriously fixed, and plans for residence arranged; he was really to begin "this wonderful married life." His letters to Jane Welsh, in those months, are among his best; truly inspiring in their crystal purity, in their simple pathos, in their Miltonic loftiness of purpose. One of these letters, dated from Scotsbrig, anticipates the evangel of labour and hope which he proclaimed fully in *Past and Present* seventeen years later.[1] "Let us not despond," he writes to her, "in the life of honourable toil that lies before us. . . . In labour lies health of body and mind; in suffering and difficulty is the soil of all virtue and all wisdom. . . . Let us but be true and good, and we have nothing earthly to dread." High aims made their course difficult to forecast; and, while Carlyle's incipient pessimism of that period was less harsh, his melancholy less severe, than the melancholy and the pessimism of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach," yet his appeal to Jane Welsh might have been expressed in these lines:—

"Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

Froude made more than the most of Carlyle's suggestion, in one

[1] *Early Letters*, Vol. II, p. 352.

of these letters to Jane Welsh from Scotsbrig, that they might get married at once, and reside temporarily at Scotsbrig, the sister-in-law becoming for the time being as one of the family. This proposal was the merest passing thought of a makeshift in Carlyle's mind, raised there by Jane Welsh's eagerness for marriage. Carlyle possessed the practicalities of patience in an eminent degree; and, Froude being witness, all his early movements contributed to his ultimate conquest. No unwise, no disastrous step, on the practical side of things, did he at any time take.

Carlyle's friends were anxious to assist him to find his niche in the world. Murray urged him to endeavour to secure the control of the *Scots Magazine*, which had fallen upon evil days, but there was no feasibility in the project. The month of October, when the first Scotsbrig harvest was secured, brought to Carlyle there "the last speech and marrying words of that unfortunate young woman, Jane Baillie Welsh." The phrase—"unfortunate young woman"—was but a sportive sally. She was not "unfortunate," in her own judgment, in getting Carlyle for her husband, whom she described with just, innocent, wholly admirable pride to her aunt, about the same time, as[1] "a scholar, a poet, a philosopher, a wise and noble man, one 'who holds his patent of nobility from Almighty God,' and whose high stature of manhood is not to be measured by the inch rule of Lilliputs." When Mrs. George Welsh returned the letter containing this sentence to Carlyle, after his wife's death, he could hardly believe the testimony of his senses in this matter, or explain how it came that he had deserved the love of Jane Welsh. Her last words before marriage had for him "truly a most delightful and swan-like melody in them"; "a tenderness and warm devoted trust, worthy of such a maiden bidding farewell to the (unmarried) earth, of which she was the fairest ornament." Scotsbrig saw Carlyle despatch his "last letter," and his "last blessing," as a lover to Jane Welsh; and on Monday morning, October 16th, his brother John and he mounted their ponies in the farmyard, while "Tom" took leave of his father's household, with what emotions

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 357.

throbbing in the mother's heart let other tender souls, not born to deride "petty pathos," imagine, and rode side by side on the long journey of thirty miles to Thornhill, where, next day, Carlyle and "the Flower of Haddington" were married.

Carlyle confessed, at this crisis in his career, that "the last year had been the happiest of his last half-score." He was "getting healthier," and there was growing within him the consciousness of power to "get the weather-gage of the Devil, and snap his fingers in the Devil's face."

## CHAPTER XIX

# Scotsbrig Memories

"WORD that all is well in Annandale, though written with the end of a burnt stick, is better to me than all the wit of poets." So wrote Carlyle to Alick in the early spring of 1827, during the happy honeymoon period at Comley Bank, Edinburgh. Ruskin has argued that the feeling for home is the ultimate test and evidence of character. No man could have honoured and loved his home with greater practical devotion than did Carlyle from first to last. He wrote regularly to his mother at Scotsbrig, as if on the assumption that her reading and culture were almost co-extensive with his own; kept her familiar with all the great names on his horizon; took her with him through sympathy in all his progress.

The farm-house, the moors towards Waterbeck (Carlyle's "Dairlaw Hill," "Blaweery," etc.), and all the pleasant country hereabouts, have passed into literary history through the avenue of Carlylean books. Scotsbrig followed Carlyle to Comley Bank, Edinburgh, after his marriage, with supplies of meal and ham, firkins of special butter, eggs, cheese, etc., which were forwarded, as in earlier Edinburgh days, by the Ecclefechan carrier. Mrs. Carlyle, now the daughter much beloved at Scotsbrig, encouraged all manner of reciprocal kindness. For over forty years, Carlyle returned regularly, missing few seasons, to Scotsbrig, when the heather was in bloom on the moors, and the harvest was being gathered in by the peasantry; while the valley rang with gossip of his fame, and his detachment from society caused envious, whispering tongues to manufacture many lies

regarding his teachings and personal life, until it seemed as if he was living too long.

At Whitsunday, 1827, Alick and Mary, Carlyle's second sister then, afterwards Mrs. Austin, removed from Scotsbrig to Craigenputtock. The relations between "the Craig" and Scotsbrig were intimate throughout Carlyle's residence of six years on the moors, the distance of 32 miles being covered by driving or riding. It was during that period that sister Margaret[1] died in Dumfries, the funeral proper taking place at Scotsbrig—the first invasion by death of Margaret Carlyle's home. Joy succeeded sorrow here when, in the year after Margaret's death, Carlyle announced from London that Lord Jeffrey had secured for Dr. John the appointment as private physician to Lady Clare, at a salary of 300 guineas a year and residence. This event solved the prudential problem for Margaret Carlyle's second educated son, whose success was due in great part to "Tom's" unwearied brotherly benevolence, which bloomed like a perennial flower on the scarred rock of his stern self-denial.

Scotsbrig had James Carlyle for master for no more than five years. Carlyle was in London when the farm was the scene of a great lamentation on account of his sudden death in 1832. He passed like the peasant hero he was to an honoured rest; and his brave wife did not murmur, for "it was God that had done it"; but accepted the widow's lot cheerfully, her splendid old Burgher piety keeping her mind in perfect peace.

There was much anxiety at Scotsbrig for "Tom" and his "Jeannie," when they removed from Craigenputtock to London in 1834. The arrival of Carlyle's first letters from Cheyne Row was then the principal event of the week. It was to Scotsbrig Jane Welsh sent her brave message, in those trying weeks of 1834, when London lay around her like an unknown ocean in whose stormy waves, in whose treacherous tides, destruction's voice was audible, and hope of conquest could come to the fortitude inherent in genius and exalted character alone:—"No fear but we shall get a living."

The autumn of 1835 found Carlyle at the nadir of fortune in

[1] *Ante*, p. 80.

London. He had finished the provoking task of re-writing the first volume of *The French Revolution*, the original manuscript having been burnt by a careless servant in the house of Mrs. Taylor, to whom John Stuart Mill had lent it—a fearful labour,

THE "LINN" IN MIDDLEBIE BURN.

"We have a linn with crags and bushes, and a "fairy knowe," though no fairies that I have seen yet."
*Carlyle* in 1826.

indeed, and made worse by the economic necessity of accepting from Mill the compensatory sum of £100 towards working expenses. "I am now for Scotland," he wrote, "to rest myself and to see my mother." He spent a recuperative month at Scotsbrig, making the journey by steamer to Newcastle, thence by coach into Annandale. He walked much on the hills behind the farm, seldom without his mother, looked into "the Sweet Milk Well" out of which the Middlebie Burn rises, and made his characteristic reflection concerning the brevity of human life and the longevity of nature—the Burn "flowing for the last four thousand years, and

eternity all around, and life a dream, and yet fact, with the sun shining over it ninety millions of miles distant, woven with uproar in the loom of time." Scotsbrig sent him supplies for the winter months of his singular campaign. The "kind mother" was his most expectant reader now; she was making him a new dressing gown of homespun wool, which was to be a present when the new book was finished. Here, in that small room upstairs, the brave letter was written by her, which[1] Froude published, in which she wished the book "a happy and a long life," and quoted the opening lines of the metrical version of the Fortieth Psalm:—

> "Wait on the Lord and be thou strong,
> And He shall strength afford
> Unto thy heart," &c.

also, Toplady's lines on the independence inherent in a good conscience; and hinted how glad she would be to see "them both" at Scotsbrig "to rest a while when the fight was over;" then, examining modestly her self-taught writing, she added in quaint self-depreciation:—"There perhaps never was a greater scrawl: wink at it." Sympathy from Scotsbrig helped Carlyle to get through with his *French Revolution*, which was published in 1837, and gave him foremost rank in letters—a book with "a kind of Orson life in it" which criticism can never kill, which the new generations cannot afford to neglect. He sent a first copy to this farm, telling his mother how another world had been conquered, and "brave old Johnson's" apothegm illustrated in his experience, that "useful diligence will at last prevail."

At midsummer in 1837, Carlyle was at Scotsbrig, and stayed for two months. He was suffering from nervous prostration, the sequel, on the physical side, to the *French Revolution* and his first course of lectures. Helpful idleness occupied his vacation then. He smoked much with his mother, his "soul's wish being to be left alone, to hear the rustle of the trees, the music of the burn, and lie vacant, as ugly and stupid as he liked." There was "soothing and healing

[1] Froude, *Life in London*, Vol. I, p. 63.

for him in the green solitude of these simple places"; and he blessed himself that "the broiling horror of London was far away." In a letter to John Sterling, which reads like prose-poetry and is Homeric in its freshness of tone, he once more celebrates the "Linn" in the

MIDDLEBIE.

Middlebie Burn, "singing its song through chasms and dingles with slight variations of score." His superior moods were returning upon him under the healing influence of the old simplicities of Scotsbrig, and it was "a brave old earth after all." One evening in the soft twilight he had ridden through Ecclefechan, looked again at "the old kirkyard tree," as the stars shone out above the graves, especially above the resting-place of his father and his sister Margaret: and he felt that "God was over all." He rode daily on "Jamie's pony," bathed in the Solway below Annan, where he could revive his earlier impressions of "the everlasting ocean's voice"; but visited little, cultivated independence by boiling his mother's tea-kettle with an

unfavourable review for fuel, and returned to London as autumn advanced completely recovered, refreshed like an Hercules from his bath, and eager to resume the battle, while his friends greeted him with the remark—"How much better you look!" Annandale had restored the Titan to calm of mind; "the immense fuff had subsided into composure." He embodied his gratitude to Scotsbrig in "a bank note," with which his mother was charged to buy "a little keg of ale and some warm things for the winter"; sternly commanded not to give the money to others as she had done in the instance of an earlier gift. If Carlyle's poverty at that date, and the murky aspect the future wore, be considered, a king's generosity could not have been more handsomely expressed.

Scotsbrig must have presented the material for an unique picture of domestic elevation of feeling when Carlyle's letter arrived, in the summer of 1838, containing another gift of £5, with which his mother and sisters were instructed to purchase whatever bits of millinery they might need or affect. He had been earning money by the lectures of that season, and they were jocosely asked to call what they might buy—"the Lecture." In September he was at Scotsbrig again, and the simple household rejoiced with him as he received a remittance of £50 in dollars from America by way of author's profits. After his return to Chelsea, Carlyle cashed this draft, and sent to his mother £5 "off the fore end of it," on the ground that Scotsbrig was entitled to share the gains of "good Annandale industry," which had curiously come across three thousand miles of salt water. "The kitlin," he quaintly remarked, "ought to bring the auld cat a mouse in such a case as that—an American mouse." Beautiful as well in age as in youth was Carlyle's love for his most amiable mother, and he was the solace of her long widowhood at Scotsbrig. When wearied with his work, "bilious, heartless, and forlorn," at Chelsea in 1840, he wrote to Dr. John:—"I should wish to be within a day's journey of my mother."

Carlyle spent his autumn holiday at Scotsbrig, also, in 1843, after *Past and Present* had been published, and had enhanced his reputation. The "condition of England question" was burdening his soul,

and the "black rain-curtains" all around had for him "a kind of bewept brightness." As a literary lion he was chased even to Scotsbrig by people who, in the gushing kindness of their hearts, wished to flatter him. He gave them "whisky and water," and a hint to abbreviate the interview, reflecting when they left that there was no rest for the wicked. Carlyle never could include the right of one man to enter the house of his neighbour, merely because the neighbour happened to be "a great man," among the rights of men; but he was usually diplomatic, though saturnine, with such "small deer"; particularly so at Scotsbrig. He read his mother's copy of the biography of Ralph Erskine—"the first of the Seceders . . . conscience living to the fingers' ends of him in a strange, venerable, though highly questionable manner!" Reflecting upon his early training yonder in Ecclefechan, he could but ask in secret:—"Whitherward are we now bound? What has become of all that? Is man grown into a kind of brute that can merely spin and make railways?" The Disruption was disturbing Scotland that year, had created, indeed, a sort of bloodless civil war. When at Scotsbrig, the ecclesiastical battle was raging around Carlyle, and he was disposed to visit one "Jenny Fraser," and give her a sovereign, would she have it, in recognition of her pluck in defying "the Duke," and offering her small property as a site for a Free Kirk in Ecclefechan. He was charmed by the courageous independence of this local "half-haveral, half-genius," who, though "as poor almost as Job," rejected "the Duke's" bribes, declaring that she had got her little property "from the Lord," and she would give it "to the Lord."

Scotsbrig witnessed the frailty of old age descending upon Margaret Carlyle. Yet in 1845, when Carlyle returned as the author of *Cromwell's Letters and Speeches*, according to Mrs. Paulet "the greatest man in Europe," she was able to take walks and drives with him in the surrounding roads. She could not sing to him now, nor laugh him out of his hypochondriacal grumbles as of old, and he was cast upon long, solitary walks again, passing through the old localities like a ghost, "feeling himself in general almost the smallest man

in Annandale"; for the greatest man, to him then, was one in perfect health, and he was "very bilious, confused, and sleepless."

Changes in the family life at Scotsbrig rendered the farm less inviting to Carlyle, but so long as the mother lived, he hardly allowed a summer to pass without visiting her. "My poor old mother," he wrote to Mrs. Carlyle, "met me once again on the Close here (the entrance to the farmyard) with a moist radiance of joy in her old eyes." This happened in 1846, when there was domestic misunderstanding and dispeace at Cheyne Row, for it was the period of "that eternal Bath House"—the sad similitude under which the innocent and honoured home of the Barings appeared to Jane Welsh in the disordered state of her nerves. The old mother was anxious about her daughter-in-law, whom she loved with all the fondness she had bestowed upon her own bairns. It gave Carlyle pain to hear her ask in a tone of baffled astonishment:—"Does Jane never mean to see us again, then, at all?" A truly pathetic Scotsbrig memory!

MARGARET AITKEN CARLYLE.

"My Jane she had always honoured as queen of us all. Never was a more perfect politeness of heart, beautifully shining through its naive bits of embarrassments and simple peasant forms. A pious mother, if ever there was one; pious to God the Maker and to all He had made."—*Carlyle, Letters and Memorials*, Vol. II, page 221.

In 1847, Carlyle sank into "stagnation and magnetic sleep," at Scotsbrig, for a few days. His mother was an old woman then of 76, and senility threw off a strange recrudescence of fear touching "Tom's" spiritual condition and his chances at the inevitable judgment-bar of the Eternal. The old trouble on account of "beliefs," which had spoiled the life of the home at Mainhill in 1819, was revived. Doubtless there would be some kind neighbours calling at the farm

to inform the mother that "Tom" was an "infidel," and that they were praying night and day for his conversion! Carlyle sought refuge in silence, wandered solitary on the moor, finding a strange mystical fellowship on the side "of the driving clouds and the moaning winds."

Margaret Carlyle, however, retained her mental acuteness to the last. In 1848, Dr. John brought mirth to the circle at Cheyne Row by telling how she had received a certain "flat-soled hero-worshipper," who had made a pilgrimage to Scotsbrig—*unus ex pluribus*—seeking an interview with Carlyle's aged mother. On meeting the old lady, this person had excitedly gasped out the words—"the mother of Thomas Carlyle?" After getting an answer, he added, still tremulously laconic—"Born where?" Detecting the loophole of ambiguity, she answered with diplomatic glee neatly dissembled—"Ecclefechan." Carlyle praised her skill at getting rid of impertinent idle babble; "no fastidious Duchess could have done the poor blockhead better."

The remoteness from the railway, which diminished the noise of passing trains, suited Carlyle at Scotsbrig, where he usually arrived sleepless from excessive smoking; but babies, and cocks that would crow at sunrise, disturbed him there with the accumulating years. After being kept awake from three o'clock one September morning here, he concluded that "this planet was not wholly made for *him*, but for *him* and others, including cocks, unclean things many, and even the Devil."

After *Latter-Day Pamphlets* was published in 1850, Carlyle retreated upon Scotsbrig in search of rest and mental composure. He was not disappointed with the result. "Nothing so like a Sabbath," he wrote to his wife, "has been vouchsafed to me for many heavy months as these last two days at poor Scotsbrig." Annandale is delightful in the harvest season, given, what Carlyle then enjoyed, "clear, calm September days." He confesses how he "could not but admit," on riding up from the Kirtlebridge side, "that the bright scene, with Burnswark and the infinite azure behind it, was one of the loveliest that he had anywhere seen. Poor old Annandale, after all!"

In 1851, the *Life of Sterling* was out of his hands, and Carlyle was at Scotsbrig for three weeks in the autumn. It was a sad visit his last in the lifetime of his mother. Her remarkable constitution gave her a blessed immunity from physical suffering, but death was visibly on the march. From Germany, in 1852, when he was collecting the topographical notes for his *Frederick*, Carlyle continued to send letters to Scotsbrig. Nothing was an excuse for any neglect of home. He described in careful detail whatever he had seen or experienced. In one of these letters to Scotsbrig from Germany, he gives a most minute account of his visit to Eisenach. Well aware that his mother would be comforted by the thought of his devotion to the memory of Luther, he elaborated his pictures by introducing local analogies, *e.g.* "Eisenach is about as big as Dumfries" . . . "a donjon tower, standing like Repentance Tower," etc. With what sacred joy the venerable mother must have read, or listened to the reading of, these splendid letters, as full of love as of learning, and conceived in a mood of profound reverence, which contained such sentences as this[1]:—"I kissed his (Luther's) old oak table, looked out of his window—making them open it for me—down the sheer castle wall into deep chasms, over the great ranges of silent woody mountains, and thought to myself, 'Here once lived for a time one of God's soldiers. Be honour given him!'"

The following year (1853) closed at Scotsbrig with the last scene of all—beautiful as with a golden sunset radiance—in the long, affectionate communion of this great peasant woman and her Titan son. Mrs. Carlyle had visited Scotsbrig in the summer and helped to nurse her. Carlyle left the Grange, and the society of the illustrious Christmas guests there, resolved to see her once more before she passed into the Great Silence, and to do what he might to smooth her death's pillow. He arrived at Kirtlebridge Station on 21st December, and walked to Scotsbrig. "Here is Tom come to bid you good night, mother," said Dr. John to her, on the night (Saturday) before she died. "She smiled assent," writes Carlyle "took leave of me as usual. As I turned to go she said, 'I'm

[1] Froude, *Life in London*, Vol. II, p. 109.

muckle obleeged t'ye.' Those were her last words in this world." Noble creature! Hers the obligation always, hers the duty, hers the fault! On the Sunday afternoon she was released, in the presence of children and grandchildren. Perennially sacred must be the little room upstairs in this humble farm-house, remote from the pathways of fashion and luxury; for it witnessed the last triumphant moments of that rarely endowed, and rarely honoured, peasant woman, the mother of Thomas Carlyle, whose life's lot might have been the envy of Queens!

From 1853 to 1881, the period of twenty-eight years which separated his mother's death from his own, Carlyle gave most of his holidays in Annandale to his sisters, Mary at the Gill, and Jean in Dumfries. In the summer of 1857, when loaded with the great task of his *History of Frederick*, he visited Scotsbrig for the first time since his mother's death, and was profoundly moved by the sight of her vacant chair. An intermittent mood of disgust with London was upon him, and he proposed to his wife that they might retire to Scotland; "keep brougham, cow, minister's man, etc. . . . there to adjust ourselves a little, there to lay down our bones."[1] On one of the Sundays of this visit, he "stood with bared head out of sight for a few sacred moments" in the kirkyard in Ecclefechan. "Surely," he remarks, "there is not any mystery more divine than this unspeakably sad and holy one. There they were all lying in peace, having well finished their fight. 'Very bonny; very bonny,' as poor old Mary Mills said in another case (of the grave of Mrs. Welsh)." Carlyle, at the age of sixty-two, standing with bared head at his parents' grave—this is a subject for some great Scottish artist to be, who may be destined to interpret for posterity, in the form and colour of art, the best side of peasant life in Annandale in the first half of the nineteenth century.

"Jamie," Carlyle's youngest brother, who was tenant of Scotsbrig in succession to his father—"kind, and honest as a soul could be"—was greatly liked by Carlyle. He was a shrewd Annandale farmer, with some of the Carlylean eccentricities—amiable and less

[1] Froude, *Life in London*, Vol. II, p. 184.

so—strongly marked. By the Middlebie Burn his memory lingers, and many anecdotes are told there of his quaint and original ways. In 1860, Carlyle was here at the funeral of his sister-in-law. At the age of sixty-five, his heart was soft, his eyes not incapable of tears. "Foolish tears," he notes, "almost surprised me," for he was in the old kirkyard again at the interment of his "good sister-in-law," and felt that "there at least was peace; there was rest." In the autumn of 1865, after *Frederick* was completed, and he felt like a Prometheus with the chain broken at last that had bound him to the hard and lone rock for ten years, he visited Scotsbrig, and was exceptionally happy. It was the beautiful harvest time again, and the skies were the loveliest he had ever seen, clear as diamonds, while the earth lay white to the harvest, "with admonitions in it against human gloom." His brother from Scotsbrig stood by his side in Edinburgh in the following spring (1866), when he delivered his *Inaugural Address* as Lord Rector of the Edinburgh University.

Nor can we turn away from this storied farm without recalling that it is mournfully related to the sudden and tragic death of Jane Welsh Carlyle. After the installation to the Rectorial office at Edinburgh, which happened on Monday, 2nd April, 1866, Carlyle went down with "Jamie" to Scotsbrig on the Friday in the same week, where he unfortunately sprained his ankle, and was compelled to prolong his visit for two full weeks. "Mighty events," to recall one of his own apophthegms, "turn on a straw." If the ankle had escaped at Scotsbrig, he might have returned sooner to London, and the tragic death of his wife in the brougham in Hyde Park might not have occurred. He was very happy here for two weeks, "so blessed was the country stillness to him, the purity of sky and earth, and the absence of all babble and annoyance." If he could not walk with comfort, he could ride on the back of the Scotsbrig pony that answered to the descriptive name of "Dirty Swift." It was here, accordingly, that Carlyle wrote his last letter to Jane Welsh, under the date of Friday, 20th April, before leaving for Dumfries. Mrs. Carlyle died in the afternoon of Saturday, 21st April. Carlyle found his last letter on his table in London unopened. The post

had not arrived when she left home for the fatal drive. Disappointed by not getting her daily letter, he had been dreaming of her on the Thursday night; in his dream he saw her "in bitterly bad circumstances." He asked her to "send better news, and not reduce *him* to a dream." It was a perfectly natural presentiment thrown upon the background of the "burden and the mystery of all this unintelligible world."

Standing on the hillside near to Scotsbrig, we can see the Tower of Repentance rising from the hill-top where signal-beacons blazed of old, close beside the little farm-house in which, in 1825, Jane Welsh was introduced to the Carlyles. Annandale, as the scene of her ante-nuptial visit, then was associated with Carlyle's highest happiness; Annandale, too, gave him the presentiment, in his dreams at Scotsbrig, of his greatest sorrow. Yet must Scotsbrig be remembered mainly as the home of Margaret Carlyle in her long, useful, blessed widowhood. Carlyle could not forget how his local Annandale friend, Graham of Burnswark, as he was leaving Scotsbrig one dark night, pointed to the light in the gable window—*her* light—and asked Carlyle this pertinent question:—"Will there ever be in the world for you a prettier light than that?"

## CHAPTER XX

# Carlyle in Annan

WE must leave Scotsbrig behind with all its clustering memories of Carlyle, and return to Annan. Carlyle had a good word for many people, and all his places were not on the coasts of some Stygian gulf. His "old familiar birthland" of Annandale was granted a gracious and patriotic absolution. Were *Reminiscences* more widely read in Annandale than apparently has hitherto been the case, the popular enthusiasm there for Carlyle's memory would be indefinitely augmented.

Back at the "smithy" and post-office of Middlebie, we take the road to the right, and, after a pleasant walk of two miles on the hillside and across a pretty dell, arrive again in the centre of Ecclefechan. From this point, we cannot do better than return to Annan by way of Hoddom manse and Landheads. When re-passing the woods around Mount Annan, we may recall how Carlyle took his summer walks here with Edward Irving, whose visits to Annan in Carlyle's Mainhill period were "the pleasant (temporary) contradiction and *reversal*, like sunrising to night, or impenetrable fog, and its spectralities!" Carlyle, dressed in his best clothes, would walk from Mainhill by this road, and "meet Irving strolling towards *him*." They walked together "down that bonny river's bank, no sound but their own voices amid the lullaby of waters and the twittering of birds."

The town of Annan is variously associated with the career of Thomas Carlyle. Here he was schooled. Here he held his first appointment as schoolmaster. Here began the friendship with Edward

Irving. Here he arrived, or left, by steamer. Here he made holiday where the river rolls down to the sea.

Annan wears a modern aspect now, but the breath of antiquity is about its walls. It was a Royal Burgh before the Battle of Bannockburn. Here Baliol, the Pretender, was defeated by Archibald

ANNAN.

"Well do I still remember the red sunny Whitsuntide morning, when, trotting ull of hope by the side o. Father Andreas, I entered the main street of the place."—*Sartor Resartus.*

Douglas, Lord of Galloway, on that dark December day in 1332, when the would-be king was forced to flee towards Carlisle on the back of a cart-horse without saddle and bridle, and half-naked in the cold. The old town was burned by Lord Wharton in 1547, lost its charter in the fire, and had to supplicate for another from a later king. History and romance alike have shed their odours upon this ancient centre of Border life, which can never be unhonoured by scholars so long as Carlyle is read.

In his biographical recollections of Edward Irving in *Reminiscences*,

Carlyle describes Annan as he knew it in his boyhood in the first quarter of the last century. "Annan," he writes, "was then at its culminating point, a fine, bright, self-confident little town": but he adds in a parenthesis—"gone now to dimness, to decay, and almost grass on its streets by railway transit." Such may have been the condition of the town in 1866, when the transition from a shipping to a railway centre was in process, the shipping almost dead, the railway traffic hardly born; but, in the interval, all this has been changed, and Annan has expanded into an important depot of agricultural commerce, while fresh industries—engineering works, etc. —have recently been introduced on the estuary of the river. In 1901, the population was returned at 5,860, whereas, in 1821, it stood at 3,000, and in 1795, the year of Carlyle's birth, it was only 1,620. The growth of the population has been slow, however, since the railways arrived and the harbour dwindled into insignificance; for, in 1836, it was registered at 5,700, or but 160 less than in 1901. In 1866, when Carlyle was compiling his recollections of Irving, Annan was passing through a period of commercial and social stagnation, suggesting continuous decline. Happily the tide has turned strongly in the direction of industrial expansion. No grass grows now in the streets, and the town has a cleanly look as it sits there mostly on the flat ground above the tidal reaches of the river, warm, hospitable, opulent at all seasons in its architecture of local red freestone.

Carlyle knew the stock whence the people of Annan had come familiarly. He had lived among their grandparents. He had taught their fathers and mothers. "To this day" (1866) he found them "an argumentative, clear-headed, sound-hearted, if rather conceited and contentious set of people, more given to intellectual pursuits than some of their neighbours." The town is a *rendezvous* for sportsmen; salmon-fishing, fox-hunting, greyhound coursing, still flourish as of old in Carlyle's Annandale. The old burgh was an admirable schooling place for such "a lad o' pairts" as our young Carlyle, sufficiently urban to form a sample, or an epitome, of the greater, and to him then wholly untravelled, world of towns and cities beyond.

The statue of Edward Irving in front of the Town Hall is the most conspicuous feature of the central street, which is likewise the ancient highway between north and south on the western side of the country. Of the two comrades, Irving has been the first to receive monumental honours at home. The statue is a creditable example of the sculptor's art, by Mr. J. W. Dods, Dumfries. It was unveiled by Dr. Charteris, on behalf of the subscribers, in 1892. Dr. Charteris, who is a native of Annandale, was then Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland—the kirk which, sixty years previously, deposed Irving from its ministry on grounds of imputed heresy. The face is reckoned an admirable likeness by the old inhabitants of the town who can still remember

EDWARD IRVING.
"But for Irving, I had never known what the communion of man with man means."—*Carlyle.*

Irving in the flesh, and were present in young wonderment and alarm on the melancholy occasion of his condemnation by the Presbytery of Annan in the local parish kirk in 1833.

On the left-hand side of the street, as we proceed towards the river, stands the frontage of the old Academy. Although long adapted now to the purposes of a superior dwelling-house, the elevation is substantially the same as in the days—a century ago—when Adam Hope made the boys "fast" for their good within its enduring walls. Here Carlyle attended as a pupil from 1806 to 1809. This venerable building was the prototype, on the architectural side at least, of the "Hinterschlag Gymnasium," with the first view of which Teufelsdröckh's "evil days began." Those school years were like sand in the mouth in Carlyle's memory. Both in *Sartor*, and incidentally in *Reminiscences*, he recalls his young life there with oppugnant emotions. He alludes to the period as "that doleful and hateful Academy life of mine." I was among "strangers,"[1] remarks Teufelsdröckh in *Sartor*, "harshly, at best indifferently disposed towards me; the young heart felt, for the first time, quite orphaned and alone." Carlyle was a sensitive young plant. He was easily made to weep. At home, he had received the Christian lesson of the duty of non-resistance; been taught to repeat Watts's lines about letting "dogs delight to bark and bite"; and the belief was grounded in him that Christianity prohibited pugilism, and condemned the fighting temper of the old Borderers as sinful. The lovely ideals inculcated in the meeting-house in Ecclefechan broke down in practice. Non-resistance meant self-annihilation even among the rude boys of the Annan Academy; and young Carlyle did not overcome his "worst miseries" there, until the latent Border fire asserted itself as against the ruinous idealism of his mother's beautiful and fragrant creed, until he began "to strike about him, to defend himself by hand and voice." He was a tender child, fair game from the point of view of the embryonic bullies in the school. "Only at rare intervals," so he writes in *Sartor*, "did the young soul burst forth into fire-eyed rage, and, with a stormfulness (*Ungestüm*) under

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. iii.

which the boldest quailed, assert that he too had Rights of Man, or at least of Mankin." After the first fight to a finish, he was let severely alone. The proximity of the glorious river, with its long, deep pools among the woods, and the sea, enhanced the amenities of the school. Here Carlyle acquired his fondness for sea-bathing. On one occasion he narrowly escaped death by drowning, when bathing with other scholars in one of the deep pools of the river.

THE OLD ACADEMY, ANNAN.
"'With my first view of the Hinterschlag Gymnasium,' writes he, 'my evil days began.'"
—*Teufelsdröckh* in *Sartor Resartus.*

The Academy afforded Carlyle a satisfactory preparatory training for the University. He excelled in mathematics from the first. The satirical invective against the "Hinterschlag Professors" in *Sartor* was intended for the race of pedagogues in the abstract, and not specifically for the masters in the old Academy in his day as a scholar there. Probably the only criticism they deserved was that they "knew syntax enough; and of the human soul thus much: that it had a faculty called Memory, and could be acted on through the muscular integument by appliance of birch rods."

The Rector, when Carlyle was here, was one Bryce Downie, but the most notable teacher was Adam Hope, who seems to have taught English grammar mostly; who probably retired partially in Carlyle's years. In *Reminiscences* he states of Hope —"nor was he

ever my schoolmaster except incidentally for a few weeks, once or twice, as substitute for some absentee who had the office." Adam Hope acquired more local fame than any of his contemporaries, and the Academy somehow came to be called "Adam Hope's Academy." Carlyle was attracted to Hope because he was a leader among the Burgher Seceders, and had been the particular friend and helper of Edward Irving; also, by his quaint originality of method, his thoroughness as a scholar, his detestation of sham and pretence in learning, and his sympathy with the earliest buds and leaves of meritorious effort. His portraiture of Adam Hope in *Reminiscences*[1] illustrates the accuracy of Carlyle's young eye, and the verdant vigour of his memory at three-score-and-ten:—"a strong-built, bony, but lean kind of man, of brown complexion, and a pair of the sharpest, not the sweetest, black eyes; . . . in his schoolroom bare-headed, hands usually crossed over back, and with his effective leather strap ('cat' he called it, not *tawse*, for it was not slit at all) hanging ready over his thumb if requisite anywhere." Hope's attitude towards the dunces was that of "a settled humanly contemptuous grin," which was made more terrific by two black front teeth that were made of cork, "the product of Adam's frugal penknife, and could be removed at pleasure." Hope was a valuable type—"a praise and glory to well-doing boys, a beneficent terror to the ill-doing or dishonest blockhead sort." Some memorial of Adam Hope ought surely to be erected in Annan, albeit his renown as a local schoolmaster is inseparably interwoven with the fame of Irving and Carlyle.

It was in this old building that Carlyle, then a boy of thirteen, first saw Edward Irving, who was his senior by three years. Adam Hope was introducing this brilliant former pupil, who was a distinguished student at the Edinburgh University then, to the Rector, and young Carlyle was in his place in the Rector's class, "attentive with eye and ear" to the visitor. Irving made an impression which did not fade from Carlyle's memory[2]:—"scrupulously dressed; black coat, ditto tight pantaloons in the fashion of the day; clerically black his prevailing hue; and looked very neat, self-possessed, and

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. I, p. 76. [2] *Ibid.*, p. 88.

enviable. A flourishing slip of a youth, with coal-black hair, swarthy clear complexion, very straight on his feet, and except for the glaring squint alone, decidedly handsome."

Young Carlyle would remain in Annan for four nights in the week, returning to Ecclefechan for the week-ends. He lodged, when a pupil, with one Waugh, a model local shoemaker, who was remotely related to his mother's family. Old Waugh was a queer creature, but "took much care of his money," and left his hoardings to be squandered riotously by his son. Carlyle received many helpful impressions from this wonderful shoemaker—"a ludicrous caricature of originality, honesty, and faithful discernment and practice." Old Waugh was the best shoemaker Carlyle had ever known.

We cannot turn away from this old Academy without remembering, also, that it was here Carlyle earned his first salary of £70 a year as the mathematical master. He was a youth of nineteen then, returned from the University. He had not sought superficial and passing honour, nor taken any degree, but the Professors had discerned good stuff in him, and he was recommended from Edinburgh for this post in Annan. The candidates were examined by Mr. White, Rector of the Dumfries Academy, and Carlyle received the appointment on his merits as a mathematical scholar. His work was quietly successful, but he was never socially "hefted to his situation" in Annan, and often accused himself in after years of the youthful eccentricity of holding aloof altogether from local society. He boarded then in the home of the Rev. Mr. Glen, minister of a new Burgher-Secessionist congregation in the town, where he was exceptionally happy. It was to bid Glen farewell that Irving and he took the adventurous voyage to Inchkeith from Kirkcaldy. Glen had been compelled by adverse circumstances to go abroad as a missionary, and Irving and Carlyle intended to salute his ship, after it had put out to sea. He was evidently too innocent and amiable for some of the people, who "sat under him" on Sundays and roasted him the rest of the week; and he was forced "to quit the barren wasps' nest of a thing altogether." Carlyle found schoolmastering a less harmless drudgery than Dr. Johnson discovered the

work of a lexicographer. His post at Annan was "not a gracious destiny, nor by any means a joyful, indeed a hateful, sorrowing and imprisoning one."[1] At Glen's he read Newton's *Principia* till 3 a.m., "and voraciously many other books." The Kirkcaldy years would have been no better had not Edward Irving been there to "charm the melancholy of solitude." Nor was there any Margaret Gordon, any *Blumine*, in Annan.

ANNAN PARISH CHURCH.
Presbyter Sloane to Edward Irving (1833):—"Remember where you are, sir!"
Edward Irving:—"I have not forgotten where I am; it is the church where I was baptized, where I was consecrated to preach Christ, where the bones of my dear ones lie buried."—*Reminiscences, Sketch of Edward Irving.*

Carlyle associates the old Academy beautifully with his second personal interview with Irving. It happened in Carlyle's last summer in Annan. Adam Hope's wife had died. Irving was on holiday from Kirkcaldy, and the two young schoolmasters met in Hope's house, both there to comfort the old man in his distress. Irving conducted family worship, "leading off the Psalm too himself," his voice strong, melodious, faith and hope in it ringing clear. Carlyle was about to leave Annan for Kirkcaldy. The rival schoolmasters to be stood face to face.[2] "You are coming to Kirkcaldy to look about you in a month or two," Irving remarked. "You know I am there. My house and all that I can do for you is yours: two Annandale people must not be strangers in Fife!" Carlyle felt as if this chivalrous attitude

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. II, p. 16.

[2] *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 98.

and offer were too good to be true, and could for the moment but mutter to himself—"Well, it would be pretty!" As the sequel proved, Irving was better, more chivalrous, than his word.

The Annan list of celebrated natives is considerable. In it we may find the honoured name of Dr. Blacklock, the blind poet and preacher who invited Burns to Edinburgh from Mossgiel after the Kilmarnock edition of Burns's poems had been printed, when "hungry ruin had him in the wind." The tragic pathos of Edward Irving's career, as if the noblest of vessels had been dashed to pieces among rocks at midnight when but half-way on its voyage, has entered into the warp and woof of the town's more modern traditions; for it was in the old parish kirk here that Irving was baptized, ordained to the ministry, and deposed. The burgh, too, is part of the Carlyle Country, and the fame of Thomas Carlyle, whom it helped to rear and teach, can never cease to mingle with the sunshine, the breeze, the driving cloud, by these old historic Solway shores.

## CHAPTER XXI

# Annan Incidents

NOT Goldsmith, not Dr. Johnson, not Shelley, nor any other name in literature was more compassionate than Carlyle often proved himself to be in relation to baffled and wasted genius or talent, albeit he was scornful sometimes of innocent people whose sole crime was that they had "arrived at insignificance." Few of his early friends were wrecked in storms raised around them as well by temperament as by circumstances. Mitchell, Murray, Johnstone, did well in the world; Irving shook Christendom itself to its foundations before young death discovered in him one whom the gods loved. But Frank Dixon, "the Annandale Rabelais," was worsted in the fight, and died among the hills "in old Roman fashion." Dr. Waugh, also, fell to a disreputable level in this old burgh of Annan.

Over the town Waugh's memory hovers like an owl croaking in the summer's night. Carlyle was his companion when a pupil in the old Academy, when he lodged with "Old Waugh," the best shoemaker that ever cut leather for him. Young Waugh was Carlyle's senior by several years. He had qualified in medicine at the University of Edinburgh. It was in Waugh's lodgings in Rose Street, Edinburgh, that Carlyle, in 1815, was first introduced to "Trismegistus Irving, a victorious bashaw," on the occasion of the first and last "unpleasant passage of fence" between Irving and Carlyle—the natural noise of the double flame produced by the meeting of two fires. This Waugh was Carlyle's mother's cousin, and Carlyle could not lose sight of him so long as hope prescribed help. He settled at length in a medical practice in Annan, and cultivated literature as

well, dying here about the age of sixty, "poor, lazy, and obscure." Waugh was gifted, amiable, much esteemed; his enemy—himself. He must have suffered from some mild phase of insanity. From Craigenputtock, in 1833, Carlyle visited Waugh. The picture [1] of Waugh's condition on that November day, with dreary winter coming fast, as given by Carlyle, might serve an artist for a model of wasted devotion to literature in an obscure provincial town. Carlyle found "the Doctor" mending his own clothes, "grizzle-locked, yellow, wrinkled, forlorn, and outcast looking, with beeswax and other tailor or botcher apparatus on a little table, the *shell* of an old coat lying dismembered on the floor," &c. Carlyle bought potatoes and meal to the value of twenty shillings, and ordered them to be delivered to the wretched Waugh, which might save him at least from immediate starvation. He had written a book on "Prophecy," which was printed at a loss; another on "Pathology," for which he could not obtain a publisher. Carlyle strove in vain to persuade him to abandon the pursuit of fame and gold in the walks of literature; the contemplation of a possible sum of £1,200 for a good comedy shot like warm light through the murky darkness of his life, the imagination making Waugh more happy than the reality could have done. Carlyle saw poor Waugh again in Annan in 1835, and, for the last time, from the mail-coach, which was changing horses at the hotel, when Carlyle was on his way to Templand in 1842. It was a February morning. The miserable Waugh, carrying his unwritten comedies in his belly, was seen "lazily and gloomily stepping across the street, on some dull errand he had, through the dim rimy morning." [2]

The happy link with Irving made Annan fruitful of many an inspiration to Carlyle. Irving was born in a cottage in Butt Street, where the birth-room is still shown to visitors. Carlyle frequently stayed for some days at a time with Irving's parents, and "remembered no visits with as pure and calm a pleasure." Irving's eldest sister married Robert Dickson, Provost of the town in his

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 378.
[2] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. I, p. 10.

day, and Carlyle was ever a welcome visitor at Provost Dickson's house.

The most noteworthy meeting between Irving and Carlyle, in the "snug little parlour" of the house in Butt Street first, afterwards at Provost Dickson's, was in the autumn[1] of 1825. Carlyle had then ridden down to Annan from Repentance Hill. Irving was at the zenith of his fame in London. It was then he told Carlyle how he had opposed "Poet Campbell's" proposal to establish "a purely secular system of education" in the then projected London University, an institution which Irving was convinced would be "unreligious, secretly anti-religious." Carlyle accompanied Irving part of the way towards Gretna, where he was about to join the mail-coach to London, and returned to his "poor Tugurium" on Repentance Hill, with much misgiving at his heart for Irving's future.

From "Howes, Annan," in 1835, when the Carlyles were in the rapids of the struggle for a footing in London, Carlyle wrote the singularly beautiful letter[2] beginning—"My dear little Wifie," which concludes thus—"Love me, my dear Lassie, and fear God; and I swear by Him there shall nothing go ill with us." Alick, in whose house in Annan this letter was written, had not succeeded in the farm of Catlinns, nor in business in Ecclefechan and Annan. In this letter Carlyle reported that Alick was looking "mainly towards Upper Canada for next spring—a resolution of painful character, yet which I cannot dissuade."

Nor can I forget a delightful Annan incident in which Jane Welsh is the conspicuous figure. Her uncertain temper admitted, Jane Welsh was among the best of mistresses to her servants. She looked upon the domestic servant as an actual human being of like passions with herself, tried to make the servant also a friend, and, excepting in two or three impossible cases, succeeded in eliciting a passionate love and devotion in this quarter. In 1836, after the Carlyles had been resident in London for two years, they had

[1] *Ante*, p. 150.
[2] *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 365.

a servant from Annan, whose name was Ann Cook. Writing to Carlyle from Templand, she asks him to give her compliments to Ann, and to "say she was glad to hear that Ann was doing well, and that she would not fail to rummage out 'Wee Jen'[1] when she went to Annan; and will *speak* French to her, if need be." Carlyle adds a footnote to this allusion, stating that "Wee Jen" was "Ann Cook's 'misfortune' belike—whose incipiency of speech had almost worn a French character to stupid Ann." Mrs. Carlyle would pass through Annan on the journey from Templand to London. Most mistresses would have declined to engage a servant who had confessed to a "misfortune" in the form of this "Wee Jen"; far less would they have broken a journey at Annan in order to "rummage out" the bastard bairn, "and speak French to her, if need be"! In little wayside deeds such as this of spontaneous magnanimity, done reckless of conventional sentiments, the queenlike nobleness of Jane Welsh was revealed, whether she might be rummaging out "Wee Jen," or drawing from Leigh Hunt the lines, as pure as they are melodious, ending—

> "Say I'm growing old, but add,
> Jenny kissed me!"

The estuary of the river Annan has been modified very much since *pre*-railway times, when Carlyle came and went by the steamers which, in those days, sailed regularly twice in the week to and from the port of Liverpool. There is still a modicum of shipping in the tidal waters of the river, together with boat-building, &c., but no steamers sail in now on the crest of the fleet Solway wave, laden with passengers from the south, to cast anchor at "the jetty"—the point at the bend of the tidal stream where deep water was available. At this "old jetty"—almost a ruin now—Carlyle was met often by Alick or James, when visiting Annandale between the years 1834 and 1850. On landing from the small steamer here, he breathed once more the air of his "old, familiar birth-land," saw a bright, glad welcome and well-done in a brother's face, and there stole over him

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. I, p. 59.

mostly the peculiar contentment which Annandale alone could bestow upon the Titan's unresting mind. Here, too, Jane Welsh landed from London by way of Liverpool, in the summer of 1841, met by Carlyle, who had counselled her from Scotsbrig "not to be too sick," and to "come jumping up when *he* stepped upon the deck at Annan Pool."

THE OLD JETTY, ANNAN.
"Come jumping up when I step upon the deck at Annan Pool."—*Carlyle to his Wife*, 1841.

By crossing the river at the bridge, and skirting the northern shores of the estuary towards the sea, past the new engineering works, the location may be reached of a small cottage, called "Newington Lodge" then, close upon the sea, not to be positively identified now, which the Carlyles occupied as summer holiday quarters in 1841. They were there for the full August month of that year. Fame had found him then. It was one of his intervals of restlessness while trying to rest. The absence of definite, productive occupation afflicted Carlyle with discontent; made him feel himself the most miserable of sinners. Fresh great books, which should excel the fame of the *French Revolution*, and the *Lectures on Heroes*, were struggling unborn within him. It was a fallow period. He was troubled with the burden of deciding whether or not he should undertake a biography of Oliver Cromwell. Consequently the month at Newby was hardly a success. Things went worse with him in the homelands at this time than in any other London year, and he recorded afterwards in his *Journal*, that "the adventure had been full of confused pain, partly degrading, disgraceful!" The entire visit to Scotland had cost him £70. Certainly the failure of the experiment was not due to

any niggardliness on his part, and he was poor enough in all conscience in 1841.

There was nothing whatever of a disgraceful or degrading nature associated with this holiday at Newby. Such was Carlyle's hyperbolical fashion of describing a prolonged period of apparently arid non-production, which smote his conscience with a more poignant agony than most people experience after positive self-indulgence. He had been more comfortable, more happy, at Newby than disgust with his intellectual idleness would allow him to feel and to confess. Jane had made the cottage "very habitable," and he was "overwhelmed" with kindness from Scotsbrig, from the farm of the Gill near by, and from Alick, who had not yet, as he subsequently did, executed his purpose of emigration to Canada. It was "the loneliest place" of the kind, within ten yards of the tide, he could anywhere have found. Before leaving London, he had written the *Preface* to the first English edition of Emerson's *Essays*, and arranged for the printing and publication of the volume on this side of the Atlantic. In writing to John Sterling from Newby on the subject of the *Essays*, he describes his abode of temporary rustication as a "small, dandified fantasticality of a cottage"—"very strange, very lonely."[1] He tells Sterling how he bathes daily, how he drives his wife, or his mother, about in a dog-cart. "It is a savage existence for most part, not unlike that of gipsies. For

ON THE SOLWAY, NEAR NEWBY COTTAGE.

"The tide is not ten yards off. . . Sky and sea, with little change either of sound or colour, such is our whole environment."—*Carlyle from Newby in 1841.*

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 219.

example, our groom is a great thick-sided, laughing-faced, red-haired —*woman*."

At Newby, in that August of 1841, Carlyle received from Concord one of the most beautiful letters, full of healthy, manly encouragement of man by man, in the Emerson *Correspondence*, instinct with the Emersonian acquiescence and optimism. Emerson was grateful to Carlyle for getting his book "printed in London," for sending it forth "graced with a preface from the man of men." His heart was full of kindliest feeling towards Carlyle.[1] "And so," he adds, "my dear brother has quitted the roaring city, and gone back in peace to his own land, not the man he left it, but richer every way, chiefly in the sense of having done something valiantly and well, which the land, and the lands, and all that wide elastic English race in all their dispersion will know and thank him for. The holy gifts of nature and solitude be showered upon you!"

Carlyle embraced solitude with a will at Newby. "None knows me," he writes to Sterling, "none ventures to know me. I roam far and wide in the character of a ghost (a true *revenant*)." In a letter to his brother John, he declares how he is living in company with "the Titanic elements, spirits of the waters, earth, wind, and mud—by no means the worst company." There is a lovely walk on the banks of the river above the bridge and the town, towards one of the largest pools, which is called "the Gallowbank (or Gala Bank) Pool." Carlyle took this walk at dusk one evening, solitary, "in a grey, wild wind." He passed the apprentice lads and maidservants at play in the streets of the old town, and sought for the lights in shop windows he had previously known, but spoke to nobody. Old scenes, old faces, returned; "no walk could have been more impressive to *him*."

Froude painted Carlyle's solitary ways at Newby that autumn in crimson, as if he had been too full of Border bad temper to be decently human. Jane Welsh told him, in her sportive exaggeration, that he was determined not to be "a lion," but to be "a tiger." In the peculiar circumstances solitariness was natural: there was

[1] *Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*. Vol. I, p. 342.

foresight and prudence in it. Twenty-five years had passed since he had left Annan for Kirkcaldy. Few old friends survived. He was now a great writer, a famous man. As such he might have been lionised enough. But he was the thinker as well, Emerson's

ON THE RIVER ANNAN.

Gallowbank (or Gala Bank) Pool.

"After dusk I walked as far as Gallowbank Pool in a grey, wild wind. . . No walk in the world could be more impressive to me."—*Carlyle from Newby Cottage* in 1841.

Scotch twin. He had opinions which the pious Scot did not understand, and consequently dreaded. Carlyle knew his local environment. His heart was full of sympathy, but the people were not to be disturbed among their kirks and creeds. It was wise to keep on the other side of the road. Scotland, in 1841, was desperately theological. Any departure by so much as a hair's-breadth from the creed of the majorities in the Presbyterian kirks was "infidelity" in the narrow judgment of the people. No matter how profound his Divine faith might be, "Tam Carlyle," or any other thinker, was "an infidel," not to be entertained for an angel of genius,

rather to be avoided as an emissary of the Evil One! The Annanites know Carlyle better now, although where kirks are mostly maintained on essentially commercial lines, the stupidities, the blatant swagger, the masked brutalities, of bigotry die hard.

The Solway coast around Newby presents many attractive features. "Right in front from this garret-window," wrote Carlyle, "lies all Cumberland; lies Skiddaw, Helvellyn, and a thousand wondrous peaks known to me from infancy." On the Scotch side, the wide expanse of the Solway can be traced as it stretches inland at the mouth of the Nith, and washes the Galloway shores in the shadow of Criffel, on towards Southerness Point. In that district, Allan Cunningham, one of Carlyle's first London friends, worked at the trade of a stonemason, and at the base of Criffel composed his song—"The Lass of Preston Mill." As he gazed across the sea towards the woods of Arbigland in Galloway, Carlyle would be reminded of the eccentric Mrs. Basil Montague, called "the Noble Lady" in the coterie talk of the Carlyles, who had visited in her sprightly youth at Arbigland mansion; had seen Burns, and received recognition and adoration from the poet; had shone as "the cynosure of all eyes" at a ball in Dumfries, wearing a dress on which, with her own hands, she had sewn real flowers; "the Noble Lady" who proffered advice to Jane Welsh before her marriage, after learning of Irving's impossible attachment to his old pupil.

While thus looking across the Firth, sparkling silvery in the August sun, Carlyle would recall how, in the second volume of his *French Revolution*,[1] he had traced Paul Jones from Paris to his birthplace in the small cottage of the Arbigland gardener, his father; condensed his career into a paragraph fit to be compared with any of Milton's sketches of the fallen angels in *Paradise Lost*; thrown the glamour of imperishable prose-poetry around an otherwise bleak and unromantic part of the Solway:—"Not now, poor Paul, thou lookest wistful over the Solway brine, by the foot of native Criffel, into blue mountainous Cumberland, into blue infinitude; environed with thrift, with humble friendliness; thyself, young fool, longing to be

[1] *French Revolution*, Vol. II, Book I, Chap. iii.

aloft from it. Yes, beyond that sapphire promontory, which men name St. Bees, which is not sapphire either, but dull sandstone, when one gets *close* to it, there is a world. Which world thou, too, shalt taste of!"

The month at Newby, in 1841, in common with nearly all his visits to the Carlyle Country, was of incalculable value to Carlyle, and his constitutional and chronic grumble harmed nobody. He took back with him to the giant's tasks waiting for his hands an impression "very strange, very sad, yet very soothing" of the multitudinous, everlasting moan of the sea. He had not the eye for the nimbler Greek's "innumerable laughter of the waves," yet ever was this old Solway to him for sacred symbolism of the majesty of the Eternal, in contrast with the brevity and relative smallness of a man's life, "with all its grievances and 'trash-trash.'"

## CHAPTER XXII

# On the Solway Coast

THE seaboard of the Carlyle Country extends along the Solway coast from Annan to the estuary of the Nith. Two houses in this district served Carlyle with enduring advantage, when he was employed in the capacity of mathematical master in the old Academy in Annan. Alluding to this period in *Reminiscences* (1815–16), he confesses that he was then "lonesome and uncomfortable." Fifty years after, he accused himself for not having visited more among the people there, for having been too shy and proud to study the special form of politeness in vogue in the district. He had "a character for morose dissociableness," and deserved it. For solacement and company, he held to the few books he could command, and an accidental friend. Chief of the accidental friends were Mr. and Mrs. Church, of Hitchell, and the Reverend Henry Duncan, and his family, of Ruthwell. "My thanks to them," writes the old man at seventy-one (in 1866), "now and always."

After passing Annan on the railway going north, the local trains stop at the village of Cummertrees, a distance of three miles from the old Royal burgh. The village consists of a long row of wayside cottages, and apparently has neither grown nor lessened much since Carlyle's youth. It is within a mile of the tide, where there is a little fishing village called Powfoot (at the foot of the Pow burn), now of growing importance as a watering-place, greatly enhanced on the side of its amenities by the enterprise of the laird of Kinmount. On the right-hand side, looking north at Cummertrees, a considerable square farm-house is seen, surrounded by trees and commanding a

picturesque situation on the gentle slope between the railway and the Kinmount woods. This is Hitchell—a superior house of its class. The dwelling-house was built by Carlyle's father when he was the

THE HITCHELL.
Residence, in 1815, of Ruskin's great-aunt.
"My thanks to them now and always."—*Carlyle* in 1866.

stonemason in Ecclefechan. Its longevity bears testimony to the honesty and thoroughness of James Carlyle's workmanship.

Carlyle's relation and college friend, Johnstone, was tutor in the family of Mr. Church, of Hitchell, steward of the Queensberry estates there, about the time when Carlyle entered upon the duties of his first mastership in Annan. Through Johnstone, he was introduced to the Churches, who were people of superior cultivation, capable of discerning the quality of the stuff whereof young Carlyle was made. He frequently visited here.

This farm-house of Hitchell passed in time into one of the avenues of intercourse between Carlyle and Ruskin. Mrs. Church

was Ruskin's great-aunt; and one of Ruskin's cousins had resided here when young Carlyle was an occasional visitor from Annan. Forty years later, Carlyle was accustomed to ride across from Cheyne Row to Ruskin's home on Denmark Hill. The talk then persistently reverted upon Annandale, and the southern counties of Scotland, and the Church family. In *Præterita*, Ruskin relates a delightful tradition of one of Carlyle's experiences, when a week-end visitor at Hitchell. "On one occasion," writes Ruskin, "while there, he went to the little Cummertrees Church, where the then minister (as a joke sometimes called 'Daft Davie Gillespie') used to speak his mind very plainly from the pulpit, and, while preaching a sermon on 'Youth and Beauty being laid in the grave,' something tickled Carlyle, and he was seen to smile; upon which Mr. Gillespie stopped suddenly, looked with a frown at Carlyle (who was sitting in my aunt's pew), and said, 'Mistake me not, young man; it is *youth alone* that *you* possess.' This was told to me by an old cousin of mine (Joan) who heard it, and was sitting next Carlyle at the time." The Cummertrees kirk stands at the end of the village towards Annan.

The two other places much associated with Carlyle on this seaboard are the farm of the Gill, and Ruthwell manse. From the higher points hereabouts, the summit of Birrenswark can be seen in the far background, with the same wide panorama of mountain, sea, and sky, on the Solway side, that charmed Carlyle from Newby. Little more than the graves of the Queensberry Douglases remain here now; the estates have passed into other hands; but an eccentric, gifted, and freedom-loving remnant of the Douglases of Queensberry is still in residence at Glen Stuart, viz., the celebrated Lady Florence Dixie, whose entrance gate is passed at a short distance beyond Cummertrees on the north road.

A mile beyond Glen Stuart, on the brae leading down to the railway bridge, the gate is reached which opens into the road that connects the farm-house of the Gill with the outer world. The farm sits high, little sheltered from the biting blast that in evil weather sweeps across those bleak environs of the sea, yet in an inviting summer situation. Here is the neat little farm-house, then, whence

so many letters are dated in the Carlyle correspondence—"the Gill, Annan." The farm, which belongs to the Laird of Kinmount, and is one of the old Queensberry farms, is tenanted still by Carlyle's nieces, whose generous hospitality, whose kindling enthusiasm for all Carlylean lore, mark them out for exceptionally worthy grandchildren of James and Margaret Carlyle. When Alick removed from Scotsbrig to Craigenputtock in 1827, his sister Mary, then a young woman of nineteen, accompanied him as housekeeper. Honourable love invaded the solitude of the mountains; for the son of the neighbouring farmer, Austin of Carstammon, wooed and won Mary Carlyle—of hot temper like all her race, but possessing the kindest of kind hearts—who became Mrs. Austin of the Gill.

Here Carlyle came for recuperation, burdened with the first and second volumes of his *Frederick*, in the summer of 1857, and wrote to his wife from this cottage of improved health since he "had escaped from the Devil's oven with its dirts and noises," and suggesting that they might retire eventually to "poor old Scotland." In 1858, he spent nearly two months here, working at *Frederick*, or reading in the shelter of the comfortable hedge that encloses the garden; or riding about on the horse lent to him from Scotsbrig; or walking solitary, often sad, in the fields, observing the ways of a "contemplative cuddy, giving utterance to the confused feeling he has about this universe"; quite overcome by the unwearied ministering kindness of his sister Mary and her family, but tortured in feeling sometimes at the thought of the physical suffering cast upon his "poor, heavy-laden, uncomplaining Jeannie"; for it was the climacteric period of Mrs. Carlyle's nervous disorder, of her mad fancies; the melancholy period which began with "that eternal Bath House." Here Mrs. Carlyle arrived in 1864, in search of health, convalescent after the severe accident that befell her at the Post Office at St. Martin's le Grand, when she was knocked down by a cab in trying to reach an omnibus. "Poor Mary," Carlyle remarked in urging his wife to seek healing at the Gill, "will do her very best and sisterliest for you; a kinder soul is not on earth." The letters of Jane Welsh to Mrs. Austin show how much the sojourn here availed to secure

for Carlyle's invalid wife, two years before her death, such partial recovery as her worn body could then command.

Carlyle was here a great deal in subsequent years, until old age made sleep difficult within earshot of the trains that pass in the night, and the problem of finding him any undisturbed nook in his "old familiar birthland baffled his assiduous friends. While man grows old and frail, the cock's crow is young and lusty as the rising sun. At the Gill, everybody was kind, tolerant, sympathetic. The surviving members of the family declare that nobody there ever knew Carlyle to "vomit Annandale grapeshot." At the zenith of his fame he was simple and innocent as a child at this little farm, where the tradition of the intermittent "sulphurous humour" is disbelieved.

MRS. AUSTIN, THE GILL.

"Poor Mary will do her very best and sisterliest for you; a kinder soul is not on earth."

—*Carlyle to his Wife* in 1864.

After a pleasant walk of two miles from the Gill and towards Dumfries, we reach the kirk and manse of Ruthwell, which stand among trees at a short distance from the main road. The village of Ruthwell—one of the nine towns and villages that lay around Carlyle's "skyey tent" on Repentance Hill—lies between the main road and the coast at the Brow Well—the chalybeate spring supposed to possess certain healing virtues, to which Burns came, a wreck in body but in mind almost of preternatural vigour, immediately before his tragic death at Dumfries in the

summer of 1796; where he last saw Mrs. Riddell, and saluted her with the question—"Well, madam, have you any commands for the other world?" The flats on the coast hereabouts are subject to occasional dangerous inundations from abnormally high tides.

The Ruthwell manse has been re-built, on the same site, since Carlyle visited there in the teens of the last century, but the former manse was a substantial and commodious country house. Dr. Duncan kept a Boarding School for the sons of the aristocracy, supplied his pupils with riding horses, and employed one assistant-master at least. Carlyle's companion, R. Mitchell, to whom so many of the "Early Letters" were addressed, was Dr. Duncan's assistant in the Boarding School.

It was at Mount Annan in 1814 that Carlyle was introduced to the minister of Ruthwell, and invited to visit at the manse. Duncan had established the *Courier* newspaper in Dumfries, and Carlyle and Mitchell contributed solutions of mathematical problems to its columns; for the local weekly newspaper was not ashamed to cultivate a connection with literature and scholarship in its appeal to the contemporaries of the Battle of Waterloo. Duncan was no idler, but full of energetic and resourceful philanthropy. He established in this Ruthwell village "a Parish Bank for the Savings of the Industrious," which became the prolific parent of the world's Savings Banks. He wrote several novels, also, which had widespread popularity in Scotland in his day. As a superior scholar, he was intimate with the literary men of Edinburgh. It was Duncan who introduced Carlyle to Sir David Brewster. Mrs. Duncan was the daughter of the preceding minister, and a lady of culture. Her name was "Agnes Craig," and she had attracted the attention of Burns as a namesake of his "Clarinda." Some days before his death, she had been talking to Burns in the manse parlour, when the setting sun shone through the window too strongly, so she thought, for the poet's weak and wasted frame, and she proceeded to draw down the blinds. "Let the sun shine in on us, my dear young lady," remarked the poet, "he has not now long to shine on me." Dr. Duncan recommended Carlyle

for a Professorship in the London University in 1827. He joined the Disruption movement in 1843, had to leave Ruthwell manse, and died in 1846, after having been for three years the venerable minister of the Free Church of Ruthwell. His tombstone in the kirkyard here records how he was "distinguished through life by many gifts and graces"; how "his last years were his best"; and "death found him a tried soldier of the Cross, cheerfully enduring hardness and contending earnestly." Young Carlyle must have been influenced by Dr. Duncan. The elective affinities are obvious between the author of *Sartor Resartus* and Ruskin's great-aunt at Hitchell and Dr. Duncan at Ruthwell.

In the Carlyle literature, Dr. Duncan of Ruthwell disappears after 1827, that is to say, after Carlyle was identified with the translation of *Meister*, and the *Life of Schiller*. Carlyle had slipped anchor in the orthodox waters, and resolved to cultivate intellectual independence at all costs. He must have occasioned dubiety and misgiving to the devout minister, who could hardly see him otherwise than as a clever young man whom the wanton study of German metaphysics had ruined. On the side of religion, however, Dr. Duncan's grandson derived more from Carlyle than from his grandfather. In 1870, this grandson ventured to write to Carlyle seeking guidance on the subject of prayer, addressing him thus:[1]—"You are my minister, my only minister, my honoured and trusted teacher." He told the venerable sage at Cheyne Row that he possessed the copy of *Meister* which Carlyle had presented to Dr. Duncan, bearing this inscription:—"To the Revd. Dr. Duncan, from his grateful and affectionate friend, T. Carlyle." In his cordial reply to this singular communication, Carlyle alluded to Dr. Duncan as "the amiablest and kindliest of men: . . . . never can I forget that Ruthwell manse, and the beautiful souls (your grandmother, your grand-aunts, and others) who then made it bright to me." It was no common triumph for our wandering Annandale Ulysses, his travels and battles in perilous seas of thought and literary endeavour all past, to receive such a letter, fifty-five years after the period at which Ruthwell manse had

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 21.

been one of the few shelters and sunny islets in the dull creek of his life in Annan.

The name "Ruthwell" is of obscure and indeterminate derivation, but there is reasonable ground for referring it to the Anglo-Saxon Runes, an unique specimen of which here has been saved from the wreck of ages, and given the kirk fame in archæology. This ancient Runic Cross of Ruthwell was broken in three pieces by the Presbyterian Puritanism of 1664, but restored by Dr. Duncan, and returned to its original place in the chancel of the kirk by a subsequent minister.

In Carlyle's youth, the village of Ecclefechan had given to the country an erratic person, with a superior gift for rhyme, called Stewart Lewis. He was a survival of the wandering minstrel, and sold ballads of his own composition far and near. Stewart sought Carlyle out in the school in Kirkcaldy in 1818—"a gray veteran, in tattered clothes, and with a pensive air, waging the same unprosperous battle which, any time these forty years, has been his constant occupation." Carlyle generously assisted the Annandale poet. "I pity the man," he wrote to Murray, "and would not wish to see him die a mendicant." In the autumn of the same year, the errant Lewis died in a low lodging-house in this village of Ruthwell from the effects of excessive drinking, and submersion, when drunk, in the Nith at Dumfries. He had dedicated his published poems to the students of his native Annandale—that is, to Mitchell, Murray, Carlyle, Dickson, Johnstone, Waugh, etc.—and Mitchell represented the students at his funeral, and erected a memorial stone above his grave, covering this strange, blighted life with a beautiful charity.

The fertile hillside district, stretching up out of the Lochar Moss, between Ruthwell and Dumfries, with the ancient lands of Torthorwald, the headquarters of the clan Carlyle in the background, has a romantic association with James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, whom Carlyle met, in a picturesque literary situation, in London in 1832. On the hillside, beyond the conspicuous Mouswald kirk, stands the mansion of Mouswald Place, in which the author of *Kilmeny* was married to Margaret Phillips in 1820, when he was in his fiftieth, or

his forty-eighth year (Hogg was not certain as to the month or year of his birth). Miss Phillips, who had waited ten years for her shepherd-poet—

"—the pawky queen,
Sae sweet, sae wicked, and sae bonny—"

was the sister-in-law of Gray, the Dumfries Rector who was the friend and defender of Burns. Hogg was growing old (full sixty) when[1] Carlyle met him at a little dinner given by Fraser, the book-seller, in the back-room of his shop in Regent Street, Allan Cunningham, Galt, and Lockhart being also present. Carlyle "felt interest in the poor 'herd body,' wondered to see him blown hither and thither from his sheepfolds, and how, quite friendless as he was, he went along cheerful, mirthful, and musical." At that date, Carlyle was to Hogg as Hyperion to a Satyr, and he was too dreadfully in earnest to be amused by the chatter of Fraser's group of light-weights, whom he harshly condemned as "not worthy to be the valets of literary men." There was no sympathy to be found in Hogg, or his friends, for the loftier ideals that swayed the mind of Carlyle in 1832, and he could but summarise the experience in his *Journal* with the laconic interjectional outburst—"*Trivialitas trivialitatum, omnia trivialitas!*"

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 233.

PENFILLAN.
Home of Mrs. Carlyle's paternal grandfather.
"It was delightful to hear my bright one talk of this old grandfather."
*Carlyle* in *Reminiscences.*

sustain his individuality of genius. This she nobly accomplished through the early stages of Carlyle's revolt against the despotism of stupidities and shams; a revolt which, although it might assume fresh phases—superficially labelled Conservative, as against the antecedent superficially labelled Radical phases—about 1845, when *Cromwell* appeared (Carlyle was 50 then), like the river that passes among new geological formations some distance above the sea, yet arrived at no real close, until the widowed veteran lost the use of his right arm, and was compelled by the natural feebleness of age to lay down his incomparable pen. Where happiness was not directly sought nor expected; where the primrose paths leading to ordinary happiness were scorned; where moor and fen, crag and torrent, were chosen with the ardour of mountaineers; it must be absurd surely to blame the one or the other for missing what they declined to seek, or because happiness, in the conventional sense of the term, thirty years after, pathetically eluded their home. Jane Welsh, at the date of her marriage, was no "softy," misled to her ruin; she knew the hazard she was taking, and rejoiced in it then with the glow of joy that is inherent ever in the noble pain of rational sacrifice. They were setting their blended lives to the music of Goethe's *Entsagung* (renunciation), and in their hearts, instead of the conventional marriage bells, rang in solemn cadence the words of Schiller:—*Ernst ist das Leben.* Carlyle's career as a personality illustrated his evangel as well in its weakness as in its strength. The prophets who call upon men to desist from the pursuit of "happiness," and choose "blessedness" instead, are not entitled to grumble because they have missed "happiness."

In an allusion to the practical side of the matrimonial outlook, Carlyle, in the courtship correspondence in 1826, cited the instance of "Wightman, the hedger,"—a pious peasant, tenant of a hut on the hill near Scotsbrig—in order to illustrate his homily touching "blessedness" viewed as independent of circumstances. Froude waxed exceedingly wroth with what his defect of humour led him to reckon cruelty on Carlyle's part in daring to threaten Jane Welsh with a social *status* anywise akin to that of his friend "Wightman"—"a

true, honest, wisely-conditioned man, an elder of the congregation." There was, to be sure, something rotten in the State of Denmark when "Wightman, the hedger," had to maintain his family on fifteenpence a day; but Froude missed the spirit of Carlyle's allusion through ignorance of the Scottish peasantry when influenced by religion. I have seen more genuine worth in the homes of people of the class of "Wightman, the hedger," than anywhere else in all the complexities of the social hierarchy. Had Froude never heard of the Transcendentalists of New England, of Thoreau in his hut by Walden Pond, or of the Brook Farm Experiment? Although strangers to one another till Emerson arrived in this country, the same high inspirations had descended upon the Carlyles in Nithsdale, and upon the dedicated dreamers of New England.

Between Dumfries and Templand—a distance of thirteen miles—the country is picturesque and storied. Burns has thrown over it the glamour of his fame. Six miles above the town of Dumfries, Ellisland nestles among trees on the banks of the Nith. On the opposite side of the river, the road passes through the village and parish of Kirkmahoe, where Carlyle's mother was born, of which Allan Cunningham was a native. Directly opposite Ellisland, across the river, stands the mansion of Dalswinton, which belonged to the Mr. Miller who was Burns's laird in his Ellisland years, the same Miller to whom Carlyle attributed the invention of the steamship. The first little boat propelled by steam made its trial trip in Dalswinton loch—a small sheet of water on some marshy land within the policies. Carlyle relates how one John Bell, a native of Thornhill who was Miller's assistant mechanic, emigrated to New York, and helped to establish the firm of "Fulton and Bell."

Beyond Dalswinton and Friar's Carse, where the old coach road crosses the Nith, the venerable Auldgirth bridge comes in sight—to be seen also partially from the railway. It is a noble structure, surrounded by picturesque riparian scenery.[1] Here James Carlyle came, at the age of fifteen, as Brown's apprentice, to work at the building of this bridge. Carlyle had a profound admiration for the honest

[1] *Ante*, p. 30.

craftsmanship that had created so enduring a fabric against the floods. He saw this lovely riverscape for the first time on his long walk[1] from Muirkirk to Mainhill, after parting with Irving at sunset

AULDGIRTH BRIDGE.

"Auldgirth Brig, which he (James Carlyle) had assisted to build when a lad of fifteen, and which was the beginning of all good to him, and to all his brothers, and to me."
—*Carlyle*, concerning his father, in *Reminiscences*.

of the previous day on the lone moors, "each to go on his own path." The bridge then lay "silent" before him, "red in the red dusk." In the summer before his death in 1832, when on a visit to Craigenputtock, James Carlyle returned to look at this Auldgirth bridge after a lapse of fifty years. On reaching the centre of the bridge, writes Carlyle in *Reminiscences*, "he started up to his knees in a cart, sat wholly silent, and seemed on the point of weeping." Carlyle was writing *Sartor* in the same year, and it was his father's pathetic narration of the hardships endured by the masons, when erecting the Auldgirth bridge, that inspired the magnificent rhetoric on the dignity of labour, in the chapter entitled *Helotage*, beginning:

> [2] "Two men I honour and no third. First, the toilworn craftsman that with earth-made implement laboriously conquers the earth, and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard hand; crooked, coarse; wherein

[1] *Ante*, p. 112.

[2] *Sartor Resartus*, Book III, Chap. IV.

notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue, indefeasibly royal, as of the sceptre of this planet. Venerable, too, is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a man living manlike," &c.

Closeburn Railway Station is situate immediately upon the main road, where it passes the village, about three miles beyond Auldgirth. We are here within a mile of Templand. At the Cample bridge, we turn to the left hand, re-cross the stream, and ascend a gentle slope above its banks. There before us, sheltered by a few old trees, stands the farm-house of Templand, the scene of the Carlyle-Welsh marriage on that pregnant October day in 1826. Froude states that the marriage took place "in the parish church of Templand." There is no such church. Templand is in Closeburn parish. The ceremony was performed in this farm-house, according to the Presbyterian custom, and not in any church. The minister of Closeburn officiated—a venerable divine, called the Rev. Charles Anderson, who had been translated from Gask in 1815. He died two years after he had married the Carlyles. They were "proclaimed" in Closeburn kirk, which has been rebuilt in the interval on the same site—a pretty sylvan situation on the fringe of the woods quite near to the railway station. The Kirk Session—the local authority that troubled Carlyle for a certificate of celibacy—kept no record which can now be discovered either of the "certificate" and "proclamation of banns," or of the marriage.

Carlyle and his brother, Dr. John, abode at the inn in Thornhill village, which is hardly a mile to the north of Templand, over the Monday night. On the Tuesday morning, the small, private family party assembled at the farm—old Walter Welsh, the grandfather; his unmarried daughter, Jean; Mrs. Welsh, who had removed from Haddington at the Whitsunday term, leaving her furniture for Jane's use at Comley Bank, Edinburgh; Dr. John Carlyle; and the officiating minister and the bride and bridegroom. Carlyle wore the traditional white gloves, and never bridegroom more thoroughly merited such hymeneal adornment. So private a wedding was rare in Nithsdale. The young couple—Carlyle was 31, Jane Welsh 25—left Templand by the coach the same day, Carlyle bargaining for

two cigars on the journey, and Dr. John returned to Scotsbrig, leading his brother's horse with the empty saddle, to tell the "kind mother" how her "Tom" had survived the ordeal.

This dwelling-house of Templand has undergone little change since the date of Carlyle's marriage here, excepting in the direction of

TEMPLAND.

'We went often from Craigenputtock, . . one of our chief pleasures, I think almost our chief, during those moorland years."—*Carlyle* in *Reminiscences*.

neglect and dilapidation. It is a two-story house, rather oblong than high, with more than the average farm-house accommodation. The marriage would take place most likely in the best room at the gable nearer the river. Apparently the house was built for special residential purposes, apart from the needs of the farm. The garden is large. Old shrubbery abounds. There is a walnut-tree, odorous in summer, close to one of the windows. The road to the front door has the look of a carriage drive fallen into desuetude. In its *ensemble*, the place wears an aspect of faded gentility. The farm is small, only 100 acres.

"Old Walter Welsh," maternal grandfather of Jane Welsh Carlyle, unsuccessful in several farms, had retired to Templand, where he died in 1832. Carlyle has lingered fondly with his Titan's pen around this haunt of bucolic peace, which he describes in various[1] sketches and letters with singular warmth of emotion and characteristic accuracy of vision. [2]"The place," he writes, "is a little farm, with hardy old farm-house, thin and high; is beautifully situated on a broad knoll in the valley of the Nith; and had been trimmed by Aunt Jeannie's frugal ingenuity and assiduity, into quite a beauty of a rustic dwelling-house with garden and appurtenances; a right pleasant shelter for the Old Papa!" Jane Welsh's uncle in Liverpool had some practical, filial interest in the arrangement. Her mother's income from Craigenputtock was also available. At the period of the marriage, and until Mrs. Welsh's death in 1843, Templand, socially viewed, would hold a position in Nithsdale somewhere intermediate between the ordinary farm and the houses of the local aristocracy. Its appearance now (1903) suggests no appreciable ascent as compared with Scotsbrig, or even with Carlyle's "poor Tugurium" on Repentance Hill.

The natural surroundings of Templand near and far are beautiful at all seasons. Below the "broad knoll," on the west side, the Nith flows among luxuriant meadows. In the Welsh days here, the river was connected with the house by "Old Walter's walk" —a footpath entered from the garden, which commands a magnificent view of the amphitheatre of hills, with the Tynron valley in the foreground, out of which rises the spire of Penpont kirk; also, the conical top of Tynron Doon. Looking north, Drumlanrig woods are seen. Across the river, not more than a mile in the distance, the farm-house of Penfillan may be traced, which was occupied by Jane Welsh's paternal grandfather until his death in 1823.

Carlyle was fond of Templand. The natural panorama around inspired him. He was soothed by the delightful stillness of the place. Mrs. Welsh, his mother-in-law, albeit an impetuous woman, hard to

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans) Vol. II—*Jane Welsh Carlyle.*
[2] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*—Vol. I, p. 4.

live with "in detail," of uncertain humours, was a lady. After she came to know Carlyle, nothing was too good for him. The "aunt Jeannie," who died in the spring of 1828, the rose of her life stolen by some false lover and the thorn left in her tender, woman's breast,

RIVER NITH, NEAR TEMPLAND.

"The first genesis of *Sartor* I remember well enough, and the very spot (at Templand) where the notion of astonishment at *clothes* first struck me."—*Carlyle* in *Reminiscences.*

had won from him laudation in overflowing superlatives. In "Old Walter," a character whose comparative failure in life was entirely honourable to him, Carlyle traced the origin of some of his wife's winsome qualities and powers.

Templand is quite near the outer world, yet more effectually hidden from it no house could be. After Mrs. Welsh's death in 1843, Carlyle was tempted to renew the lease, and retain the farm for a retreat from London, or a quiet nook to which he might retire when the hurly-burly was done. The walks and drives in the surrounding country are not excelled anywhere else in the Scottish Lowlands. From the side of the "broad knoll" towards the north road, looking across the valley through which the railway passes, the wooded hills arrest the eye in the heart of which Crichope Linn lies concealed. This charming glen, with its chasms, and cascades, and rumbling

waters, and rocks bedecked with ferns and wild-flowers, was much visited by the Carlyles from Templand. There is a tradition of Balfour of Burleigh having baffled his pursuers by hiding in a cave in this haunt of deep, natural gloom—the "little man, squint-eyed, and of a very fierce aspect," who, in "the killing times" of the seventeenth century, was one of the principals in the murder of Archbishop Sharp. When he was lonesome at Craigenputtock, in the last autumn which the Carlyles spent there, Mrs. Carlyle being on a visit to Moffat, Carlyle composed a set of verses on Crichope Linn, which they had then recently revisited from Templand. [1] "After tea," he writes to his wife, "I did—what think you?—composed some beautiful doggerel on the Linn of Crichope, and fair Ludovina." The verses were written on the margin of the sheet in the small, neat handwriting which Carlyle had at his command.

CRICHOPE LINN.
"Maiden mild, this level path,
Emblem is of her bright being."—*Carlyle.*

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 366.

"CRICHOPE LINN.

(*Loquitur genius loci.*)

Cloistered vault of living rocks,
  Here have I my darksome dwelling,
Working, sing to stones and stocks,
  Where beneath my waves go welling.

Beams flood-borne athwart me cast
  Arches see, and aisles moist gleaming;
Sounds for aye my organ blast,
  Grim cathedral, shaped in dreaming.

Once a Lake, and next a Linn,
  Still my course sinks deeper; boring
Cleft far up where rays steal in,
  That as 'Gullet' once was roaring.

For three thousand years or more
  Savage I, none praised or blamed me;
Maiden's hand unbolts my door—
  Look of loveliness hath tamed me.

Maiden mild, this level path
  Emblem is of her bright being;
Long through discord, darkness, scath,
  Goes she helping, ruling, freeing.

Thank her, wanderer, as thou now
  Gazest safe through gloom so dreary;
Rough things plain make likewise thou,
  And of well-doing be not weary.

'Gullet' one day cleft shall be,
  Crichope cave have new sunk story;
Thousand years away shall flee—
  Flees not goodness or its glory."

The poem has small intrinsic merit, but much Carlylean significance. Carlyle was a great poet, but the gift of melodious verse was denied to him. "Quite a jewel of a piece," he describes the effusion in playful irony in the letter, but he appends these German expletives to the string of verses itself:—"Ach Gott, wie lahm, wie krüppel lahm!" The poem was a compliment to Jane Welsh, an expression, half-veiled, of determination to conquer in the battle

which they had elected to fight; a prophecy of coming victory and fame.

When visiting Templand from London later, Carlyle "strolled" into Crichope Linn. The two pretty daughters of his wife's uncle in Liverpool were of the party.[1] "There pausing, well aloft, and shaded from the noon sun, the two girls, with their father for octave accompaniment, sang us 'The Birks of Aberfeldy' so as I have seldom heard a song; voices excellent and true, especially his voice, and native expression given; which stirred my poor London-fevered heart almost to tears."

Two incidents, in the main, confer distinction upon Templand in connection with Carlyle. The one is the marriage which, on the side of creative literary work, was the making of Carlyle: the other is the suggestion of the formative and architectonic idea of *Sartor Resartus*. "I well remember," writes Carlyle in *Reminiscences*, "when and how (at Templand one morning) the germ of it rose above ground." If there be any truth in the venerable saw that a man can only become what his wife will let him, Carlyle owed infinitely much to his marriage. It was largely through the ministering pluck of Jane Welsh by his side that he rose equal, after marriage, to the immortal *Kunstwerk* of *Sartor*; and grew strong enough to stand alone, and to repeat, in face of the obstructing world, Goethe's poetical rendering of the deep truth, viz., that time is worth any number of big battalions to genius that comprehends its trust:—

"Mein Vermächtniss, wie herrlich weit und breit!
Die Zeit ist mein Vermächtniss, mein Acker ist die Zeit."

"My inheritance, how wide and fair!
Time is my fair seed-field, of Time I'm heir."

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans), Vol. II, p. 146.

## CHAPTER XXIV

# The Carlyles in Nithsdale

CARLYLE described Templand as occupying "one of the most picturesque and pretty situations to be found in the world." Kindred spots abound in the Thornhill district of Nithsdale. The walks and drives hereabouts are not excelled anywhere else in Scotland.

From 1826 to 1842—from the marriage of Thomas Carlyle to the death of Mrs. Welsh—the Carlyles were much at Templand—from Craigenputtock at short intervals for six years; from London almost every summer for eight years. They would ride, or drive from Craigenputtock either by way of Auldgirth bridge and Dunscore, or through the village of Penpont and the Pass of Glen-shinnel, where Carlyle observed "the clearest water he ever saw out of Cumberland," and by Maxwelton ("Maxwelton Braes" of the old ballad) into Glencairn valley. There is no bridge between Thornhill and Auldgirth. On one occasion, when riding home from Templand, the Carlyles attempted to ford the Nith on horseback, and narrowly escaped being carried down the treacherous stream. The road through Penpont, past the Scaur Water, was Carlyle's favourite long walk from Templand. "The Scaur Water," he wrote in one of the letters to Chelsea, "came brawling down, the voice of it like a lamentation among the winds." They drove a great deal among the old woods that surround the stately Drumlanrig Castle, the seat of the Duke of Buccleuch in Nithsdale, which overlooks the river from the north-west side. In the long catalogue of titles appertaining to the double Dukedom of Buccleuch and Queensberry, one reads thus:—"Viscount of Nith, Torthorwald, and Ross." Evidently the heritage

of the Lords Carlyle of Torthorwald, founders of the clan Carlyle, had drifted on the tides of historical chance and change into the hands of the Douglases of Queensberry and the Scotts of Buccleuch.

On the east side of Templand, not far from Closeburn kirk, hidden in the woods, the ancient Closeburn Castle stands, the historical seat of the Kirkpatricks of Nithsdale. Closeburn Hall is situate a short distance to the north-east of the Castle, a mansion built by the family of Menteith, by whom the estate was purchased from the Kirkpatricks in 1783. This Hall became the property of Mr. Douglas Baird in 1852, but in the year 1836 it was occupied by the Menteiths. Writing to Carlyle from Templand in that year, Mrs. Carlyle informed him that she had seen[1] "William Menteith and his beautiful wife, much fitter for him than I—young as himself, and silly as himself, and happy-hearted as himself." Carlyle, in a note, explains that this gentleman was "laird of Closeburn's youngest son: had been a scholar at Haddington formerly—scholar, lover," &c.

In the summer of 1839—when his *Chartism* was at the stage of incubation—Carlyle spent his holiday at Templand in a mood of exceptional glee. Dr. John, who was by this time a person of means and desirous of repaying his brother, thoughtfully provided a dog-cart and a serviceable horse for the season, and Mrs. Welsh invited Carlyle's mother from Scotsbrig. The pipes, the "tea shines," the singing of old Border ballads, the pensive or hilarious walks and talks with "the kind mother," were pleasantly resumed on the banks of the beautiful Nith, and Carlyle was as merry as a schoolboy released for the summer vacation.

The Carlyles, however, were not made to be happy or at peace among themselves always, either in the Carlyle country or in London. Things went badly with Carlyle at Templand in 1841—the summer of the month at Newby. He met his wife from the Liverpool steamboat at Annan, and drove her to Templand the same day. Some trivial cause of irritation had intruded, which spoiled the joy of the arrival. Carlyle could not sleep. It was the middle of July,

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. I, p. 60.

and his wakeful eyes caught sight of the coming dawn. At three o'clock he rose, "with leave had," harnessed his horse noiselessly himself, and drove to Dumfries. Writing next morning to his wife he said:—[1] "It was the beautifullest sunrise when I left Templand. Herons were fishing in the Nith; few other creatures yet abroad. I could not make the cock hold his tongue on the roost. I am afraid he still kept thee awake." Twenty-five years later he recalled this curious Templand incident in *Reminiscences*, stating that it was the only time he ever saw "a hernshaw (herrin'-shouw, the Annandalers call it) actually fishing."

Mrs. Welsh died at Templand in the early spring of 1842, when the rental of Craigenputtock (£225) reverted to the Carlyles—"a small *peculium*," so Carlyle described it to Lockhart, "which might keep the hawks out of a poor author's eyes." The illness was brief, death from apoplexy sudden. Mrs. Carlyle was in feeble health at the time, and could not travel beyond Liverpool, where she was compelled to submit to nursing, and not permitted even to write letters. At Liverpool, the news of her mother's death reached her. They had quarrelled much, but love was to blame; it was the bickering of two burns side by side in a spate, a flood of affection; and Jane Welsh's grief was proportionate to her love and gratitude. Carlyle hastened to Templand, and was detained a prisoner there for six weeks, discovering his aptitude for business in winding up affairs.

The sojourn at Templand, in 1842, was contemporaneous with one of Carlyle's fallow seasons, when his future work was shaping itself in the subconscious processes of the brain. His books were written in his brain first, on paper afterwards. It was the idle period between *Heroes* and *Past and Present*. He was oppressed by "the condition of England question," for the year 1842 was the blackest year Scotland knew in all the last century. At Templand he was detached from every sort of literary work. He wrote long letters to his wife, never missing a day, and giving her a complete diary of his habitudes; other valuable letters were written

[1] Froude, *Life in London*, Vol. I, p. 217.

here in those weeks, to Erskine of Linlathen, to Lockhart, and to Emerson. In the letter to Emerson he describes his ways in this pleasant confinement on Nith's side:—[1] "I lead a strange life; full of sadness, of solemnity, not without a kind of blessedness. . . . It is many years since I have stood so in close contact face to face with the reality of Earth, with its haggard ugliness, its divine beauty, its depths of Death and of Life." In the correspondence with Lockhart from this solitude he describes the natural amphitheatre around, on an evening in spring, in a spontaneous outburst of prose-poetry: "The mountain-tops are aglow like so many volcanoes: it is poor tarry shepherds burning their heather to let the grass have a chance. Sirius is glancing blue-bright like a spirit—a comrade of more than twenty years. Penpont smoke-cloud and Drumlanrig Castle have alike gone out. In the north is an Aurora—footlights of this great theatre of the Universe, where you and I are players for an hour. God *is* great; and all else is verily altogether small." [2] It was at Templand, during this melancholy period in 1842, that Carlyle received from Lockhart the beautiful lines bearing upon the traditional belief in personal immortality, which Carlyle was fond of repeating in his latest years:—

"It is an old belief
  That on some solemn shore,
Beyond the sphere of grief,
  Dear friends shall meet once more:

Beyond the sphere of time,
  And sin, and fate's control,
Serene in changeless prime
  Of body and of soul.

That creed I fain would keep,
  This hope I'll not forgo;
Eternal be the sleep,
  Unless to waken so."

Mrs. Welsh died in comfort at Templand, nursed by her friend, Mrs. Russell, and left the sum of £189 in the bank. "Oh, Jeannie,"

[1] *The Correspondence of Carlyle and Emerson*, Vol. I, p. 363.
[2] *Life of Lockhart*, by A. Lang, Vol. II, p. 238.

exclaims Carlyle, "what a blessing for us that we fronted poverty instead of her doing it! Could the Queen's Treasury compensate us had we basely left her to such a struggle."

On the day of the public sale at Templand, Carlyle escaped through the Dalveen Pass—by the road he had travelled to Edinburgh after the marriage in 1826—to the ancient St. Constantine churchyard, which is situate between Crawford and Abington in a corner of Lanarkshire. It was there he had buried Mrs. Welsh among her ancestors. Borrowing a chisel and a hammer from the nearest farm-house, he corrected the punctuation in the grandfather's memorial. "The Clyde rolled by," as he stood among the tombs of his wife's maternal ancestors, in its everlasting course; and "the old hills rested mournful, desolate, pure and strong all round." Mrs. Carlyle subsequently erected a beautiful memorial of her mother in that lovely graveyard among green, pastoral hills, concluding the inscription with this characteristic excursion of pathos:—"Her only daughter and child, Jean Baillie Welsh, now Carlyle, of Chelsea, London, far from the graves of her loved ones, has had this memorial inscribed, A.D. 1842."

DR. RUSSELL, THORNHILL.

Nithsdale possessed more than one eminent physician in the last century. In the village of Thornhill, there is a unique small museum which was bequeathed to the inhabitants by Dr. Grierson,

scholar, scientist, antiquarian, of more than local repute in his day. Dr. James Russell, also, was a noted pluralist in the district—physician, banker, magistrate, everybody's friend and counsellor. This medical practitioner, and his popular wife, were intimate friends at Templand, and their home was, in later years, Mrs. Carlyle's favourite holiday quarters in Scotland.

After leaving Templand, and reaching the road by the burn below "the broad knoll," if we turn to the left-hand side and walk

"CARLYLE'S SEAT" AT HOLM HILL.

towards the river, a large, square house is soon reached, standing close to the bridge. This is Holm Hill, the residence formerly, from about 1860, of Dr. and Mrs. Russell—the amiable Mrs. Russell to whom so many beautiful letters are addressed in the correspondence of Jane Welsh. From the windows at Holm Hill, the farm-house of Templand can be seen. Both houses have the same lovely surroundings, but Holm Hill has the advantage of proximity to the river. This house was always agreeable to Carlyle. It was exposed to the gaze of the local world from the road, which was objectionable in the years when everybody wanted to see, or to shake hands with, "the celebrated author." Here at Holm Hill, the kind Russells erected a special summer-seat for Carlyle among the thick foliage

of the trees and shrubs, where he might smoke, or read, or talk with his select friends, undisturbed by bucolic lion-hunters. This plain wooden structure, worn with age, is still preserved in its original location in the grounds at Holm Hill, and labelled—"Carlyle's Seat."

MRS. RUSSELL, THORNHILL.

Jane Welsh Carlyle discovered a "sister" in Mrs. Russell, who was a lady of surpassing kindliness and benevolence, gifted with a rare sweetness of disposition, in her forbearance inexhaustible, possessing a singular charm of personality. She was the daughter of a local Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Mr. Dobbie, and had inherited the small estate of Breconside. Although Mrs. Carlyle had never resided at Templand longer than six months at any one time, she was devoted to the neighbourhood. "There is not a tree," she wrote to Mrs. Russell, "or a stone about Thornhill that I should not like to hear about, never to speak of the *people!*" Mrs. Russell, who was a Cordelia with voice ever soft, gentle, and low, had the knack of drawing out the sweeter nature of Jane Welsh, who looked to Holm Hill, as she grew old, as to a second home. "Shall I ever forget those green hills?" she asks, in a letter to Mrs. Russell—"My Darling"—in 1862, after her return from Holm Hill, "and that lovely church-yard, and your dear, gentle face!" Accommodation for the Carlyles was limited at Scotsbrig and the Gill, whereas there were rooms *galore* at Holm Hill, and this home of

the good Russells thus passed into Mrs. Carlyle's headquarters in Scotland, where she stayed during some of Carlyle's visits to his own family in his "old, familiar birth-land." In 1865, after Carlyle was released from the *Frederick* bondage, Mrs. Carlyle, then a confirmed invalid more or less, was visiting at Seaforth Lodge as the guest of the amiable second Lady Ashburton, when she

HOLM HILL.

wrote to her old nurse, Betty Braid, thus: "I am just as much at home with Lady Ashburton as with Mrs. Russell; they are the two kindest hostesses on earth." Shattered in health, nearer the close of her rainbow life than she knew, Jane Welsh spent her last summer here at Holm Hill—"where I am always welcomed," she remarked, "like an own child."

Holm Hill is within ten minutes' walk of the central cross-roads in the premier Dumfriesshire village of Thornhill. The roads are wide, clean, decorated with trees, while the houses wear a look of superior comfort. To the visitor who knows nothing of its scandals and sorrows, this village is reminiscent of Arcadia, at once in its dower from nature, and in the apparent simplicity of its inhabitants; or even of some corner of the Garden of Eden that had strangely

lost its way among all the hurly-burly of human history; and we do not wonder that Thomson, the explorer, should have been born there, rather that Thornhill has not filled the world with great men.

Here in a well-conditioned, modern house survives (1903)[1] Mrs. Broadfoot, the last housemaid at Cheyne Row in Mrs. Carlyle's time —from July, 1865, till April, 1866—who passed with Carlyle through the terrible period of anguish consequent upon Mrs. Carlyle's death; who saw the sage bowed to the ground with inconsolable grief, after the light of his life—his "Jeannie" from Templand—had been suddenly extinguished in the tragic gloom. Her maiden name was Jessie Hiddleston, and Mrs. Carlyle had brought her from Thornhill to London, because she was Margaret Hiddleston's (an old Templand servant) daughter, because she "had great faith in breed." Jessie Hiddleston's grandfather, too, had been the first to put her on the back of a pony. This servant remained with Carlyle in his widowhood until her marriage, when he told her that he had never been so well served by any other, and would miss her. Where Mrs. Broadfoot dwells, the breath of detraction in respect of the Carlyles —husband and wife—dare not enter.

Over all this lovely and pleasant valley of the Nith, where the Covenanters held their conventicles, where Robert Burns sang at his work as an exciseman the lyrics that have made him immortal in poetry, where both families of the Welshes had their ancestral homes, the memory of Jane Welsh Carlyle lingers in fragrant beauty. Her mother was kind to the poor, and the Templand pensioners were transferred to Mrs. Carlyle at her mother's death. Mrs. Russell was her almoner. For twenty-four years—from 1842 till 1866—some homes were brightened, some hearts cheered, the burden lightened on a few weary backs, hereabouts, through the constant and unostentatious benevolence of "Old Walter's" gifted granddaughter, the queenly Jeannie Welsh. "I send also to your care," she wrote on one New Year occasion to Mrs. Russell, "a little thing for old Mary. She used to like dearly a bit of finery, and I flatter myself this handkerchief will quite please her."

[1] See article by Reginald Blunt, *Cornhill Magazine*, October, 1901.

## CHAPTER XXV

# The Retreat to Craigenputtock

AT the close of his essay on "Goethe's *Helena*," Carlyle remarks,[1] regarding his German master, thus:—"Like his own Euphorion, though he rises aloft into Æther, he derives, Antæus-like, his strength from the earth. The dullest plodder has not a more practical understanding, or a sounder or more quiet character, than this most aerial and imaginative of poets." In describing Goethe in this passage, Carlyle was unwittingly describing himself. His "practical understanding" was discovered in the policy of the retreat upon Craigenputtock.

We last saw the Carlyles, in this narration, at the start of the honeymoon journey to their first home at Comley Bank, Edinburgh, where they resided for the eighteen months from October, 1826, until May, 1828. Few young married people could enjoy more "blessedness" than fell to the lot of the Carlyles at Comley Bank, albeit the leaden present and the uncertain future must have impaired their "happiness" in the conventional sense of the term. They were watched over both from Scotsbrig and from Templand. At the first New Year, Mrs. Welsh sent them the gift of £60, in case they should be suffering from "cleanness of teeth." Carlyle was resolute, patient, hopeful in the stern battle, and Jane Welsh was his *alter* (or *altera*) *ego*, for constant intellectual stimulus to him. His first literary effort—experimental—after marriage took the shape of a didactic novel. The eagle could not do the work of an inferior bird, and the experiment failed. Probably, however, this abortive

[1] *Miscellanies*, Vol. I.

novel prepared the way for his masterpiece of phantasy in *Sartor Resartus*. Sir David Brewster, De Quincey, Sir William Hamilton, among others, visited at Comley Bank, and Mr. Procter (Barry Cornwall) sent Carlyle an introduction to Francis Jeffrey—an incident which opened to Carlyle the columns of *The Edinburgh Review*. The contents of the first volume of *Miscellaneous Essays* (1839) were written at Comley Bank—"Jean Paul Richter": "State of German Literature": "Life and Writings of Werner": "Goethe's *Helena*": "Goethe." The first two essays appeared in *The Edinburgh*, the remaining three in *The Foreign Review*. Goethe was one of his readers, and, at Comley Bank, the second letter from Weimar arrived, accompanied by Goethe's marriage gifts. During those eighteen honeymoon months, Carlyle was a candidate for two Professorships—the one in the then newly-established London University; the other, the Chair of Moral Philosophy at St. Andrews, in succession to Dr. Chalmers. The second candidature was well worth while, because it brought to the struggling pair Goethe's testimonial, containing such prophetic encouragement as this:—[1] "Wodurch an den Tag gelegt wird, dass er auf einem originalen Grund beruhe, und die Erfordernisse des Guten und Schönen aus sich selbst zu entwickeln das Vergnügen habe." Goethe had the insight to discern that Carlyle was "resting on an original foundation." Sufficiently provided for within, he needed no Professorship from without to assist him towards his exalted goal. The testimonial was the third communication from Weimar, and it was accompanied by a second consignment of valuable presents. Through Goethe Germany discovered Carlyle. When retreating to Craigenputtock, he was understood by two persons only—Goethe and Jane Welsh. These two were enough; all the world would follow.

The Carlyles migrated from Edinburgh to Craigenputtock at the Scotch Whitsunday Term in May, 1828. They resided there for six years. "Cacophonious," as Charles Buller remarked, was the name, never to be thrown into rhyme or melodious verse. We can follow the Carlyles to this "Craig of the Hawks" or "Gleds"—"Craig of

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. I, p. 431.

the Puttick," sometimes "Putto"—most conveniently by returning from Thornhill to Dumfries, and driving to it by way of Irongray and the Cairn valley, a delightful drive of sixteen miles. There is a Light Railway now in the district with a station at Dunscore; but in order

THE NITH AT DUMFRIES.
Devorgilla's Bridge.

to appreciate the full significance of Carlyle's exile on the moors, it is almost essential to drive, as he was wont to do, from Dumfries.

After crossing the river Nith by the New Bridge at Dumfries, we turn into the old Glasgow road, which the road to Irongray and Craigenputtock joins a mile beyond the town. The road hereabouts runs near to the site of the cottage in which Helen Walker lived, the "Jeanie Deans" of the *Heart of Midlothian*, and conducts us by Cluden's lovely banks, with Queensberry hill on the remote north-west horizon, and all the fertile, wooded, undulating lands of Lower

Nithsdale around, past the ancient kirk of Irongray, which stands in a tranquil nook, where the murmuring moods of the river alone disturb the solitude. In this pleasant kirkyard the grave of Helen Walker may be seen. It is surrounded now by an iron railing—a

IRONGRAY KIRKYARD.
Grave of "Jeanie Deans."
"Respect the grave of poverty when combined with love of truth and dear affection."—*Sir Walter Scott.*

precaution which became necessary as the stone was getting its dimensions seriously abridged by pilfering visitors. The ponderous raised horizontal stone, which Sir Walter Scott caused to be erected, bears an epitaph composed by Scott himself, containing these words :—"This humble individual practised in real life the virtues with which fiction has invested the imaginary character of Jeanie Deans. . . . Respect the grave of poverty when combined with love of truth and dear affection." This memorial was placed here in the autumn of 1831, when the Carlyles were in London, for the winter, from Craigenputtock.

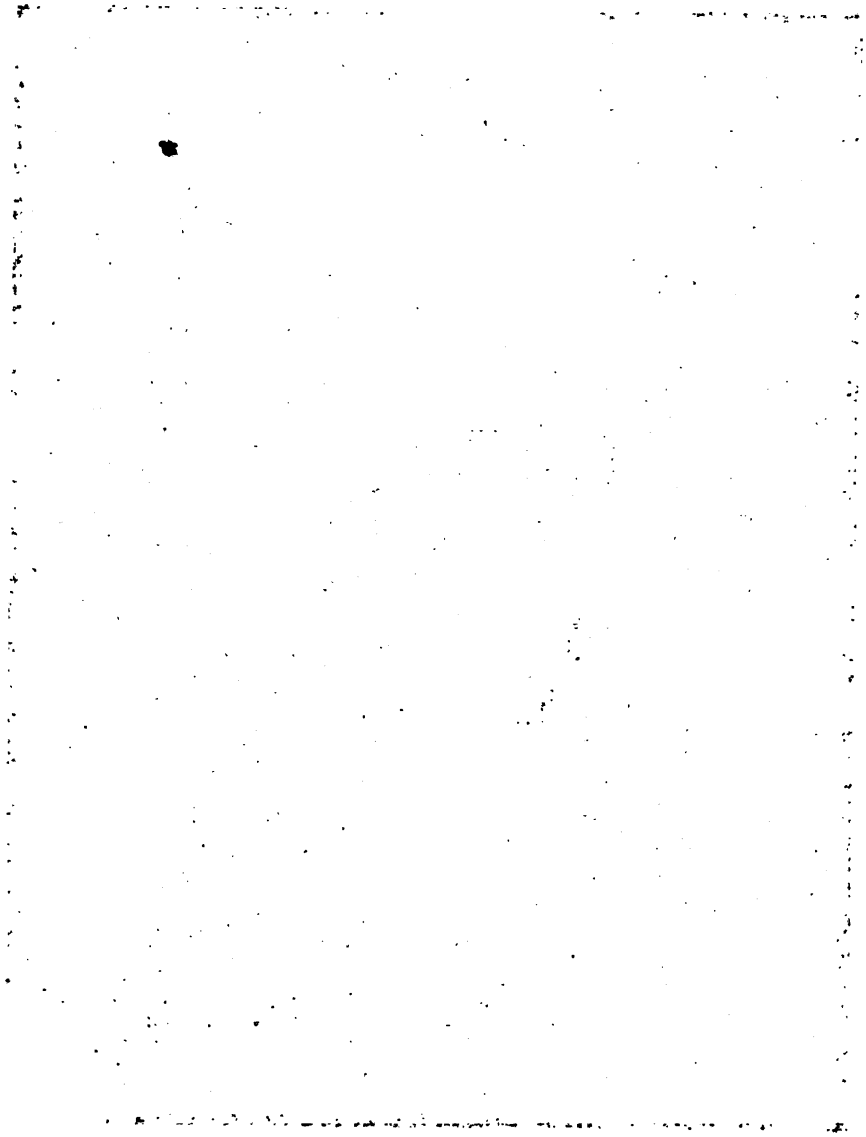
The little, ivy-clad kirk by the river's bank has a great local

history behind it. The Rev. John Welsh was minister of Irongray in 1662, when driven forth from his living in consequence of his Covenanting principles. He was a grandson of the John Welsh, minister of Ayr and son of John Welsh, laird of Collieston and Craigenputtock, who married John Knox's daughter. Here, too, after Carlyle had removed to London, preached, and wrote articles for *Fraser*, the Rev. Dr. A. K. H. Boyd, whose simplicity construed Carlyle's ejaculation, when told that "A. K. H. B." was the preacher in John Knox's pulpit at St. Andrews—"God help them!"—into "Mr. Carlyle's peculiar manner of invoking the Divine blessing upon his (Dr. Boyd's) labours."

As we pass into the woods above the kirk of Irongray, "the martyrs' stone" arrests attention, erected in a field and encircled by trees, about two hundred yards from the road, towards the river, keeping black there the memory of "the bloodie Lagg" with doubtful historical perspective, and keeping green the memory of the Covenanters—"martyrs whose ashes repose on this spot." It was hereabouts—between the kirkyard and the bridge beyond—that in June, 1830, on returning from the "death-bed of his sister Margaret, Carlyle,[1] in the evening, having at last reached the silence of the woods, fairly lifted up his voice and wept aloud a long time." Carlyle, in 1867, was not ashamed from the pinnacle of his fame to make this confession; for he knew, with Leigh Hunt, that a man's eyes have nothing nobler in them than their tears.

A short distance beyond the martyrs' stone the road crosses a tributary of the Cluden, or Lower Cairn, by the Rowting, or Routen, bridge. Carlyle describes this section of the road to Craigenputtock when relating the incident of the dinner to Allan Cunningham, at Dumfries, in the summer of 1831. He was the most temperate of men at all his stages, but at this dinner he had let himself go to some extent, and fell asleep in the arms of Bacchus when driving home. Thirty-five years after he felt, in the retrospect, that the drive was full of danger; that he owed his escape then to the "small black mare, nimble, loyal, wise." The chief danger was at

[1] *Reminiscences* (Longmans) Vol. I, p. 307.



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"'Rowting,' *i.e.*, bellowing or roaring, 'Brig'—spanning a loud cataract in quite an intricate way, for there was an abrupt turn just at the end of it with rapid descent, and wrong road to be avoided." The road is improved now, but there are still "ascents, descents, steep enough" for a *post*-prandial midnight drive!

This hill country on the borderland of Dumfriesshire and Galloway is singularly picturesque, hospitably wooded, with opulent mansions at intervals, with comfortable farms about, and with the Cairn Water and its tributary burns lending brightness and animation to the landscape. After turning away from the course of the river, and the new Light Railway, into Glenessland (or Glenesslin) valley, we pass Sundaywell on the left-hand side—a small estate situate at the head of the glen, which, in "the killing times," belonged to James Kirko, a Covenanter who was shot on the sands at Dumfries in 1685. The house is very old, and the walls are four-and-a-half feet thick, and impervious to frost.

The hills in front and around rise to a considerable height, "Bogrie" on the right being credited with over 1,400 feet. Directly in front, the dark hill, with summit resembling the prow of a ship, is the Craigenputtock hill, where Carlyle and Emerson walked, when the young American was here in 1833. Passing the farm of Castrammon on the left, the road leads along the slope of the Glaisters Hill, until Carlyle's Craigenputtock comes in sight, sitting cosily among trees half a mile from the road. In Carlyle's day, this road was being continued as far as the river Urr, and the Corsock road. The funds of the local authority got exhausted, and the quarry at which the road-making stopped, in consequence, was humorously denominated by Carlyle—"the grave of the last sixpence!" On this "bleak moor road," across the Glaisters Hill, Carlyle took his solitary walks at twilight; here he resolved "to let the Devil go his way." He concludes a letter to his mother, in 1834, with this remark:—"I must now out for my gloaming-shot (twilight walk) on the Glaisters Hill."

The estate of Craigenputtock—a single farm of about 1,000 imperial acres, 200 acres arable, 50 acres planted, and the rest moor-

land pasture for black-faced sheep, yielding a rental varying with the market from £200 to £250—was Jane Welsh's dower as the only child of Dr. Welsh of Haddington. "My brave little woman," wrote Carlyle, "had by deed of law two years before (before her marriage) settled her little estate upon her mother for life, being clearly indispensable there. Fee simple of the place she had at the same time by will bequeathed to me, if I survived her." There was no next-of-kin surviving on the Welsh side in Carlyle's old age, and he bequeathed the estate to the Edinburgh University in the form of "Welsh Bursaries."

Craigenputtock was originally an appendage of the larger neighbouring estate of Collieston, and, as such, remained in the parish of Dunscore and the county of Dumfries, although it was placed by nature in wilder Galloway, and lies immediately on the boundary. About the period of the Reformation, the Welshes owned Collieston and other lands in Dunscore and Holywood parishes. In time, the family parted with the other estates, but retained Craigenputtock. Through her mother's family of Baillie Welsh, Mrs. Carlyle could trace her descent from William Wallace, in half-jest, half-earnest; and, on the side of her father's family of Welshes, she seriously believed, or tried to believe, that she was descended from John Knox. "What a pedigree!" exclaimed Edward Irving. The descent from Knox had no sufficient basis in accessible history.

John Welsh, minister of Ayr and son-in-law of Knox, was not the eldest, but the second, son of John Welsh, laird of Collieston and Craigenputtock. The eldest son was named "David," and he succeeded to the estates in 1619. John, who married Knox's daughter, never returned to the old home, nor did his three sons.[1] Of the three sons, Josias became Professor of Humanity in the University of Glasgow. His son, named "John" after his saintly grandfather, was minister of Irongray, ejected there in 1662. The family of David Welsh, the elder brother of Knox's son-in-law, kept the estates, although the name of the eldest son—the heir—apparently reverted soon from "David" to "John." Accordingly, Jane

[1] Young's *Life of John Welsh.*

Welsh, for better or worse, had not a drop of Knoxian blood in her paternal descent. The matter was never quite clear to Carlyle; and, manifestly, the descent from "David Welsh," elder brother of the minister of Ayr, is conclusive.

In 1661, the Welshes were still in Collieston, but by 1757, when Jane Welsh's paternal grandfather was born, they had sold Collieston and then occupied the two Craigenputtocks—Nether and Upper—alone. This John Welsh, her grandfather, made an early marriage in Tynron, and returned to his father's farm. His family was large; times were bad; debt came upon him; he was forced to sell, first, the smaller farm of Nether Craigenputtock to the stranger; next, Upper Craigenputtock to his eldest son, who had become a thriving practitioner in Haddington. Doctor Welsh took over the estate, paying out the other members of the family as he could, and the grandfather removed to the farm of Milton in Tynron; subsequently to Penfillan, where he died in affluent circumstances in 1823. Mrs. Carlyle's father, who was a strong personality, was born at Craigenputtock in 1776.

Carlyle had his eye upon Craigenputtock for several years, whereas Jane Welsh was prejudiced against the place on account of its remoteness from civilised society. Her father contemplated retiring to the old farm of the Welshes before his early death. Carlyle suggested marriage and settlement at Craigenputtock to Jane Welsh in 1825, before he removed to the farm on Repentance Hill. She was shocked. She was a sprightly young woman, happy in the social circle; why should she and Carlyle marry and at once proceed to bury themselves alive on the moors, where drink or suicide were traditional temptations offered by an insufferable solitude? "You and I," she wrote to Carlyle, "keeping house at Craigenputtock! I would as soon think of building myself a nest on the Bass Rock. . . . I could not spend a month at it with an angel." It was a lover's quarrel. Jane Welsh could not let Carlyle go; but she pleaded with him to have done with "the wild scheme," warning him that there were twenty chances to one that he would be swallowed up in the moss, spade and all. She modified her judgment of "the

wild scheme" after her visit to Repentance Hill, where she saw a beautiful demonstration of the possibility, in Carlyle's case, of blending the cultivation of literature with life on a farm.

Jane Welsh was reconciled to the experiment at Craigenputtock by the severity of the struggle in Edinburgh, and by the arrangement whereby Carlyle was to live on the farm, while his brother should be the responsible farmer, the rent to be paid between them by fraternal arrangement. She would be nearer her home at Templand. Carlyle would get scope and opportunity for producing his *Kunstwerk*. She sacrificed her keen social instincts, renounced herself, in order to prepare a way before her husband. They had chosen the rugged pathway of intellectual independence. The Edinburgh world—the Jeffrey family at Craigcrook excepted—was cold to them. They might hold seats in the church, but they did not go forward to the communion. They might be Radical in their political sympathies, but they could not give up to party what was meant for mankind. Diogenes in his tub found Edinburgh no fit place for him. Dr. John Carlyle, whom Thomas had sent to Germany, was about to take a practice, and might settle at Dumfries. In that case, the family cohesion on both sides would be complete, all their "dear ones" being within visiting distance of Craigenputtock; all resident in the one county. Mrs. Welsh approved, generously rebuilt the old house, magnanimously accepted all Carlyle's plans.

Alick entered upon the lease of Craigenputtock at Whitsunday, 1827. Carlyle had seen the place for the first time with Alick six weeks earlier, and was ecstatic about its possibilities. They would sit there "under their own bramble and saugh tree, and none to make them afraid!" The Carlyles were to follow from Edinburgh as soon as the repairs upon the house were completed. In 1827, after the introduction to Jeffrey, Carlyle's prospects improved in Edinburgh, and the retreat to the moors was postponed. When the candidature for the Chair at St. Andrews failed, however, his way seemed more thoroughly obstructed than ever before, and the baffled disciple of Truth, Liberty, Poverty, could only fall back upon Craigenputtock, remarking to his wife:—"At the Craig, if we stick

together as we have done, we may fairly bid defiance to the constable."

In March, 1828, the house was ready for them at "the Craig." Carlyle visited the place for the third time, superintending the work

J. Patrick.] CRAIGENPUTTOCK. [Edinburgh.

"I incline to think it the poor *best* place that could have been selected for the ripening into fixity and composure of anything useful which there may have been in me against the years that were coming."
—*Carlyle* in *Reminiscences*, 1867.

of preparation, his mother there from Scotsbrig, sparing no effort or sacrifice in order to make the house a fit home for his wife. On those "grey, blusterous March days" he stood here, with the proof-sheets of his essay on "Goethe's *Helena*" in his hands, discussing details with the architect, while Mrs. Carlyle was detained at Templand by the death of her aunt. When they returned to Edinburgh, the landlord had let the house at Comley Bank. "The best of our news is," he then wrote to his mother, "that we *are* coming down to the Craig this Whitsunday to take up our abode there; . . . whither should we flit but to our own house on the moor?" Mrs. Carlyle had visited Craigenputtock with her husband during the previous summer.

She was now completely at one with Carlyle concerning the wisdom of the undertaking, and felt as if she was going home. They spent the last two nights in Edinburgh with the Jeffreys—Jeffrey appearing then to Carlyle as "one of the kindest little men he had ever met with." Six carts from Scotsbrig and Craigenputtock conveyed their furniture to the moors. The Carlyles followed on the Scotch Term day (May 28th) by the Edinburgh coach.

This retreat upon Craigenputtock was the beginning of the supreme formative period in Carlyle's great career as scholar, thinker, writer of books. His retreat was symbolic of his inner life of thought and high endeavour. The moorland home, with its sepulchral stillness, with its solitude "almost Druidical," was about to accredit itself in history as the nursery of a new prophet. Here, where the stillness was sometimes so profound that Mrs. Carlyle imagined she could hear the sheep nibbling at the grass among the roots of the heather, at that Whitsunday of 1828, the chord was about to be struck which Lowell has interpreted in his *Columbus*:—

> "If the chosen soul could never be alone,
> In deep mid-silence, open-doored to God,
> No greatness ever had been dreamed or done;
> Among dull hearts a prophet never grew;
> The nurse of full-grown souls is solitude."

It was not the retreat of a beaten soldier, but the voluntary withdrawal from the open field of a master of strategy in the sphere of the intellectual life.

## CHAPTER XXVI

# First Period at Craigenputtock—from Whitsunday, 1828, to August, 1831

CHARLES BULLER detected the ludicrous in Carlyle's retreat to the "cacophonious" Craigenputtock. Yet Thomas Carlyle was saved from making himself ridiculous by his sense of humour. He loved Irving, but could hardly restrain innocent merriment when he saw him among his ecclesiastical eccentricities. The "cacophonious" name of the place was the only butt of ridicule about the migration from Edinburgh to Craigenputtock. The efficient adaptation of means to ends in the scheme, viewed as another makeshift in the career of the hero as man-of-letters, demonstrated that the mystic and dreamer, so-called, possessed the practical gifts nature might be expected to bestow upon the son of a stonemason.

The house at "the Craig," where we are now, was enlarged and completely renovated before the removal from Edinburgh. For many years (1903) the farm has been occupied—appropriately so—by the family of Carlyle's [1] nephew and niece, the son of his youngest brother, and the daughter of his sister Mary. Early in their wedded life here the husband died; and Mrs. Carlyle, a most intelligent and hospitable lady, assisted by her son, another John Aitken Carlyle, who has inherited some of the Carlylean gifts and qualities, continues as tenant of the farm.

According to Froude, Craigenputtock is "the dreariest spot in all the British dominions." Froude had not visited all places,

[1] This kinship accounts for the Carlylean relics shown at Craigenputtock.

otherwise he should have escaped this pitfall. There are hundreds of farms and cottages of shepherds in Galloway alone much more isolated and dreary than Craigenputtock. Carlyle has been condemned by many biographers and critics for the grave offence of

J. Patrick.] CRAIGENPUTTOCK HILL. [Edinburgh.

"There we sat down, and talked of the immortality of the soul."—*Emerson* in *English Traits*.

selfishness, and cruelty to his fair young wife, in taking her to this dreary solitude, among the black moss-hags of Galloway and Dumfriesshire, where even the vegetables are savages; as if there could be no civilised life at an elevation of 700 feet above the sea! The season accounts for the impression, to be sure, which the visitor may carry away from Craigenputtock. From March until October it is an ideal moorland residence. There is health on the wings of the wind. The rolling hills around by day, the stars in the canopy of the sky overhead by night, make it a select haunt for the lover of the mountainous aspects of nature. In August the bloom of the heather robes the mountains in purple, and in mid-winter the snow on the summits of Merrick and the Cairnsmores in the west lends an Alpine charm to the otherwise bleak solitude. There were few

neighbours in Carlyle's time, for communication with Corsock was not then opened; in winter the resources of the mind are necessary there. For three months at a time, Carlyle observed, not a solitary stranger approached their door. It is a haunt of solitude, but there is nothing killing about it, especially for young people who were society within themselves and had little unoccupied time to be miserable.

Nor was the residence here to blame for Mrs. Carlyle's delicate health and chronic physical weakness. Jane Welsh was never more vigorous in body than during the six years on the moors. Froude absurdly construed a temporary illness—a severe cold—in the winter of 1830 into a permanent breakdown of health. "Instead of suffering in health,"[1] writes Sir James Crichton-Browne, "Mrs. Carlyle benefited immensely by the sojourn at Craigenputtock, not as regards her weak chest, for she never had one, but as regards her nervous system. It was a perfect sanatorium for a case like hers—mild and yet bracing, with pure air and water, abundant sunshine and new milk, and affording repose and freedom from excitement."

In blaming Carlyle for imposing all sorts of barbarous menial duties upon his wife here, Froude was misled by Miss Jewsbury's "mythical" sketch of the life at Craigenputtock. Carlyle was not the farmer; his brother was, and he occupied the house as scholar and writer. Mrs. Carlyle kept an experienced servant. She was the lady of the house, who managed her own small household. She believed in the dignity of labour, and made it her business to master the art of managing the poultry yard and the piggery and the rose-garden and the kitchen. She delighted in culinary tasks, and amused herself by trying to milk the cows. Yet, if the life at Craigenputtock *had* injured Mrs. Carlyle's health, would Carlyle have been blameworthy? "I came hither," he wrote to Goethe in 1828, "purely for this one reason: that I might not have to write for bread, might not be tempted to tell lies for money." We may condemn Carlyle's impracticable idealism, with Jeffrey, but, in censuring Carlyle, we dare not hold Jane Welsh blameless. They were in complete

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle, Introduction*, Vol. I, p. 41.

intellectual agreement, complete spiritual sympathy; they had grown together into the same philosophy of life, with the same high ambitions. If a lady Cambridge Wrangler should intelligently elect to marry an explorer, and spend six years with him in some "Devil's Den" in Central Asia, with detriment to her health, would the explorer deserve to be condemned for "a selfish and unfeeling brute"?

Carlyle knew full well what he was doing, and the provision which he made here for his wife's comfort was relatively perfect. The house is in itself sufficient evidence in this connection. "We got to the front door," wrote Carlyle of his return visit in 1858, "where the poor old knocker, tolerably scoured still, gave me a pungent salutation." This brass knocker is typical of the substantial and prescient utilities of the house throughout, which has a plain frontage to the north-east, is built upon a rock foundation, and with thick walls. There are eight rooms, and one kitchen, which was added when the Carlyles came in 1828. The drawing-room and dining-room, on the ground floor, each measure 16 feet by 14 feet. From the drawing-room, which is to the right hand as the hall is entered, a small room opens towards the "yard" behind, having a large window. It is an exceedingly bright, cheerful apartment, and the blue mountains of Galloway can be seen from the window. This room was Carlyle's study. In it *Sartor Resartus* was written. The dining-room is on the opposite side of the hall, and behind it there is another small room. On the second floor, there are four bedrooms and a small dressing-room. The kitchen is well to the back, large and well lighted; it contains still a ponderous "dresser," which the Carlyles left here when they removed to London in 1834. In winter, there is not a more comfortable house than this "in all the British dominions."

"Craigenputtock," Carlyle remarked, "is the place for writing." It was the place for reading, for thinking, for vision of principles and laws, for tracing the ways of the Eternal in the awesome symbolism of the transient, and therefore the place for producing literature deserving the name. In the first summer here, Carlyle

wrote his splendid *Essay on Burns*—"the wettest and warmest summer ever known." This masterpiece, which will be read as long as the lyrics of Burns shall be sung, appeared, after a victorious conflict with Jeffrey, in the *Edinburgh Review*, and

J. Patrick.] ROOM IN WHICH "SARTOR RESARTUS" WAS WRITTEN. [Edinburgh.

"I will speak out what is in me, though far harder chances threatened. . . I must to my Dreck, for the hours go."
—*Carlyle* to Dr. John, 17th July, 1831.

Goethe translated parts of it into German, and published them among his collected works. The *Essays* followed, which form the second and third volumes of *Miscellaneous Essays*, in 1829—*Heyne; Voltaire; German Playwrights; Novalis; Signs of the Times; On History*; the first four appearing in the *Foreign Review*, and the *Signs of the Times* in the *Edinburgh Review*, while the paper *On History* opened a fresh connection for Carlyle in *Fraser's Magazine*. Then, in 1830, he produced the essays—*Richter; Schiller; The Nibelungen Lied; German Literature*; and *Luther's Psalm*. He also compiled many notes for a complete history of

German Literature, which was never published. In addition to the above ponderous catalogue for two years, the *Kunstwerk* of *Sartor* crowned the edifice of labour in this first Craigenputtock period. When battling against obstructions in 1830, he declared that he had "a book in him that would cause ears to tingle, and one day it must and would issue." This book was *Sartor*, written in its final shape in the first seven months of 1831. Many passages in this masterpiece must have been outlined at intervals in antecedent years; for the *Kunstwerk* was the fruition of the thought and experience of Carlyle's whole past life; and the idea of the symbolism of clothes, which came to him as humorous material at Templand, was merely the stage scenery which gave an artistic framework to his philosophy of man and the universe; while Craigenputtock supplied much of the sublime imagery of the work, and kept Carlyle, as he wrote, undisturbed in the exalted, prophetic mood which gives *Sartor* a permanent place in the literature of religion. Jane Welsh read the chapters as they were finished, and handed back the last of them to her disconsolate, yet heroic, husband with the remark: "It is a work of genius, dear."

Year by year the solitude, with its economic struggle, with its strange deficiency on the side of human society, grew more difficult to overcome. Carlyle never was in any danger from the temptation to drink whisky, and his unwillingness to sip Scotch drink was old Walter Welsh's standing complaint against him. They were saved by labour and hope. As the months and years passed, however, many a lovely and joyous rainbow rose on their skies among the shifting clouds. Viewed from within, the struggle was a holy war, and had in it much of the warrior's stern joy. Visitors came and went from Templand and Scotsbrig and Dumfries. Lord Jeffrey, Lady Jeffrey, and their daughter, visited them twice: first in October, 1828; next in September, 1830, unexpectedly, when Mrs. Carlyle accomplished her remarkable gallop to Dumfries and back in search of supplies; the "big carriage climbing the rugged hill-roads." Here the friendship with Jeffrey, which was not based upon intellectual agreement, and therefore the more creditable to Jeffrey,

was consolidated, while the remonstrance which he made touching the impossibility of accepting the "Crag of the Hawks" for an ultimate was greatly for Carlyle's good.

LORD JEFFREY.

"A beautiful little man . . . and a bright island to me and to mine in the sea of things."
—*Carlyle* in *Reminiscences.*

The event of the week was the arrival, on Saturdays, of the weekly post from Dumfries. They had a considerable correspondence; with their own people mostly; and the Craigenputtock letters that have been published, although sometimes sad in tone, have about

them the freshness of the moors. While Alick and Mary were on the farm (until 1831) the two families drank tea together on the Sundays. Dr. John was much there on his return from Germany in 1829, and greatly augmented Mrs. Carlyle's happiness. One of the really joyous events was the coming of Carlyle's sister Margaret, and Dr. John, on horseback from Scotsbrig, bearing a letter from Goethe, which had been received at the Post Office in Dumfries. The [1] death of Margaret in the following year was the crowning sorrow of the period. In the summer of 1831, when he was finishing *Sartor*, Carlyle was unusually aggressive; and he attended at Dunscore kirk one Sunday—"for the first time these many months"—"on account of the Irish collection"; and some days later, he drove down to the dinner to Allan Cunningham in Dumfries.

Troubles thickened. Alick was obliged to give up the farm in 1831. He had lost the sum of £400 by it in four years. This meant loss for Carlyle also. Unable to obtain a fresh farm for some time, Alick returned as his brother's guest, but strangers came upon the domestic scene. Carlyle's returns from the magazines were precarious and irregular. He had no "savings" behind him now. Alick had to be helped out with the rent; Dr. John went to London in search of employment, and Carlyle supplied him with funds. His books did little. The world did not know him then. Time was necessary in order to ripen the mind, feeling, taste by which ultimately he should be appreciated. In 1830, he was reduced to the last £5; and in the first months of 1831, he wrote in his *Journal* thus:—"N.B. I have some five pounds to front the world with—and expect no more for months. Jack, too, is in the neap tide. Hand to the oar."

Compensations abounded. Nearly fifty years after, Carlyle could write of the residence at Craigenputtock on this wise:—"Perhaps those were our 'happiest days' . . . what a fairy palace she had made of that wild moorland home of the poor man." Love was there, untarnished by the wear of years and the intrusions of wider renown. Carlyle was to his wife then the "kindest and dearest of husbands,"

[1] *Ante*, p. 80.

and she was miserable in his absence. They rode out together on the bracing moorland roads. After the sum of £11 had been invested in a light dogcart, they drove together to Templand, or to Scotsbrig, in the free fortnights which Carlyle gave himself after each essay was finished. The companionship of married life was ideal, perfect, unique. It is false biography to antedate events, or to read the crabbed old people into the warm-blooded, sprightly youths. The irritation, the sharp, excoriating retorts on both sides, which darkened the home at Chelsea now and then long after this period, were unknown at Craigenputtock, or had not then begun. Hero and heroine were united. Jane Welsh was Carlyle's inspiration. She made herself the efficient housekeeper; sacrificed her own literary gifts in her husband's interest, with an intelligent purpose which the sequel justified to her undying honour; gave her strength of mind and heart for his support. Carlyle, consequently, accomplished at this period much of his best didactic writing. His literary style was matured in its second and third stages, the second being at its best in the *Essay on Burns*, the third in *Sartor*.

The fall of night brings out the stars. The struggle in those first three years at Craigenputtock disclosed Carlyle's resources of faith, reverence, piety, and heroism. He was never so intensely religious as at this time. Not that he was always in his best mood. Sometimes hope to him was no better than "a smiling rainbow" which no urchin could find; life "a thawing iceboard on a sea with sunny shore"; man "a foolish baby, demanding all, deserving nothing." But the heroism in him was constantly nourished upon the thought thrown into some rugged verses addressed to his wife in 1830, which contain these two stanzas:—

"Lone stands our home amid the sullen moor,
Its threshold by few friendly feet betrod;
Yet *we* are here, we two, still true, though poor:
And this, too, is the world—the city of God!

"O'erhangs us not the infinitude of sky,
Where all the starry lights revolve and shine?
Does not that universe within us lie
And move—its Maker or itself divine?" &c.

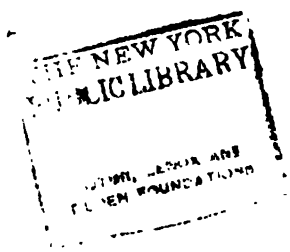
It was in 1830, in this period of dejection caused by tardy recognition, that Carlyle, here on the lone moor, translated *Luther's Psalm.* He must have sent the translation in manuscript, before it appeared in *Fraser's Magazine*, to his mother; for he writes to her, under date of 10th October, 1830, saying:—"I will send you Luther's Hymn which I have translated into verse; Luther made the music too, but I have not." The poem, he wrote, "jars upon our ears; yet there is something in it like the sound of Alpine avalanches, or the first murmur of earthquakes; in the very vastness of which dissonance a higher unison is revealed to us." Out of the experience of struggle in solitude at this "whinstone stronghold" came Carlyle's forceful lines:—

"And were this world all Devils o'er,
And watching to devour us,
We lay it not to heart so sore,
Not they can overpower us."

Born of the darkness and the tempest on the moors there also was the thrilling passage at the close of the chapter on "Organic Filaments" in *Sartor Resartus*, which was paraphrased into a hymn having poetry in it, and the inspiration of contact with experience, by William Johnson Fox.

On the morning of the 1st August, 1831, Carlyle rose at two o'clock here, and drove with Alick to Glencaple Quay, a distance of twenty-three miles, Glencaple being seven miles below Dumfries, through a most beautiful country all the way, to join the little steamer there for Liverpool. He was on his way to London, and the manuscript of "the unfortunate *Sartor*" was stored carefully in his portmanteau. It was "a hazy day," and Carlyle's outlook was "hazy." The first period at Craigenputtock was ended; he could not then perceive that the retreat had already justified itself by results, although the market for the finished wares might not yet have arrived. He had secured "fit audience though few." Encouragement had reached the moors from Paris; but probably Carlyle valued most the tribute which arrived from Weimar when Goethe sent the German edition of the *Life of Schiller*, containing his eulogium of the young

*The Kitchen. Craigenputtock.*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GLENCAPLE QUAY.

Where Carlyle embarked for Liverpool (*en route* to London), with the manuscript of *Sartor Resartus* in his bag, in August, 1831.
"About to part; and who knows for how long, and what may come in the interim."—*Mrs. Carlyle.*

Scottish writer, and Moir's sketch of Craigenputtock, "engraved at Frankfort." He was poor in cash, but his assets were priceless. He had manfully declined Jeffrey's proffered annuity of £100, and although he had just accepted a loan of £50 from the same magnanimous friend towards the expenses of his visit to London, his watchword to the brave wife whom he had left sorrowful on the moors, as to himself, was—"Courage!" At "the Craig" he had honoured the motto—*Nulla dies sine linea!* It was in time to honour him in its turn.

NOTES.

(*a*) The kitchen at Craigenputtock has derived an unsavoury name from Miss Jewesbury's "mythical" story of Mrs. Carlyle's adventure in a snowstorm, when the snow fell down the chimney, and spoiled the nice results of her scrubbing, which Carlyle, pipe in mouth, had been called in to witness. If this did occur, it was entirely due to the accident of the servant's prolonged absence on account of the impassable roads. Carlyle had no recollection of the incident, and remarked that it was "probably as much of a joyous half-frolic as anything else." He did remember Mrs. Carlyle's first home-made loaf, and how, "in triumph and quizzical gaiety, she compared herself to Cellini and his Perseus."

(*b*) The farmer proper at Craigenputtock—whether Alick Carlyle or a stranger—occupied a comfortable cottage at the opposite end of the yard from the larger house.

## CHAPTER XXVII

# Second Period at Craigenputtock—from April, 1832, to May, 1834

THE love of congenial work was so strong in Carlyle that his star of genius burned with scarcely less brilliance at the zenith of his fame, when he wrote his *Frederick*, than it had done twenty-five years before in the midnight darkness at Craigenputtock. Yet night made "Friedland's star" burn, in his case also, with a radiance more beautiful, sweeter, more kindling on the side of the higher emotions, than it ever did afterwards in the translucent noonday of fame. "Present my remembrances to Mrs. Carlyle, whom that stern and blessed solitude has armed and sublimed out of all reach of the littleness and unreason of London." So wrote Emerson to Carlyle in the autumn of 1834, after the Carlyles had settled at Cheyne Row. The sterner aspects of the solitude were discovered fully during the second period of the temporary, makeshift retreat to Craigenputtock.

Alick and Mary had gone from the farm. Dr. John's prolonged visits were past. The little society of two households was impaired. Carlyle might have cultivated angling in the lochs and burns, but he was not an Izaak Walton. There were rabbits and hares and winged game about, but Carlyle never fired a gun, and took a holiday from home when the shooters arrived on the moors, or in a sullen humour composed Count Zähndarm's epitaph:—*Qui dum sub luna agebat quinquies mille perdrices plumbo confecit . . . si monumentum quæris, fimetum adspice.* He took his recreation in the

saddle, or cut firewood from the plantation, or walked on the Glaisters Hill. Jeffrey could have done more for him had he not been "so dreadfully in earnest"; but, in that case, Carlyle would not have been Carlyle, and mankind would have missed a prophet. The balm of solitude was work; and Carlyle had two of the primary conditions of great work to his hand, viz., absolute quietude, and the stimulus of companionship, the friction of scholarly communion, on a plane which was almost that of intellectual equality, in Jane Welsh.

DR. JOHN CARLYLE.

"I am hardly better off here for society than at Craigenputtock; not so well off as when you were there walking with me and reading *Ariosto*."—*Mrs. Carlyle* in first year at Cheyne Row.

Carlyle reached London on 10th August, 1831, after travelling to Liverpool by steamer, thence by coach. Dr. John, with whom he had arranged to lodge, met him at Islington, and conducted him to his apartments in Bloomsbury. Mrs. Carlyle joined him on 1st October—her first visit to London—and they were comfortably housed at 4, Ampton Street. Carlyle resumed former literary associations. In the interval he had secured the friendship of Lord-Advocate Jeffrey, who was then in London mostly, and assisted him by means of introductions; also, obtaining for Dr. John the lucrative appointment of private physician to Lady Clare. At 4, Ampton Street, off Gray's Inn Road, Carlyle wrote the prefect didactic essay entitled, "Characteristics," published in the *Edinburgh Review*; also, his review of the Croker edition of "Boswell's Johnson," which

appeared in *Fraser's Magazine;* and the fragment on "Biography." One of the great cleansing sorrows of his earlier life came to him there in the death of his father.[1] The most productive introduction he received during the visit of six months was that to John Stuart Mill.

The main purpose of Carlyle's visit to London from "The Craig" was to seek a market for *Sartor Resartus.* Doubtless he was, at the same time, secretly calculating the chances in this "great collection of men," glad to escape the winter rigours at the "peatbog castle of many chagrins." The first brief outline of *Sartor* had been rejected in 1830, and now the full-grown "unfortunate" was kicked downstairs by three publishers—Murray, Longmans, and Colburn and Bentley. Fraser offered to publish the "unfortunate" for a sum not exceeding £150, but Carlyle preferred "to wait till the end of eternity for a publisher." *Sartor* returned with the Carlyles to Craigenputtock, as he had left; that is to say, in the naked manuscript, but not ashamed. The "unfortunate"—child of the mist and the moorland blast—was admitted piecemeal to *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833–34, and first published in book form proper, through Emerson, in Boston, U.S.A.

By the middle of April, 1832, the Carlyles had returned to the "peatbog castle." At Dumfries the news reached Carlyle of Goethe's death. His first task for this second period of work on the moors was the [2] panegyric on his friend, patron, Master, who sleeps at Weimar. He resumed his seat in the library here at the small, well-grounded table on which *Sartor* had been written, and produced his elaborate essay on [3] *Goethe's Works;* also the essays on *Corn-Law Rhymes* and *Diderot,* and translated Goethe's *The Tale* and *Novelle.* Carlyle was turning his mind the way of France in the eighteenth century, beginning with Diderot. Libraries therefore were needed. Dumfries could not serve him, and the founder-to-be of the London Library asked himself querulously why there should not be "a Majesty's library" as well as "a Majesty's jail and gallows" in every county town.

[1] *Ante,* p. 81.

[2] *Death of Goethe—Miscellanies,* Vol. IV.

[3] *Miscellaneous Essays,* Vol. IV.

The rest of the year 1832 was unfruitful of incident. Mrs. Carlyle has left us a charming picture of their common life here, about this date, in a letter to Eliza Miles.[1] After lashing the conventional "fine lady" in her sportive, satirical way, who "would have nothing for it but to die as speedily as possible" were she obliged to reside on the moors, Mrs. Carlyle adds:—"For my part I am very content. I have everything here my heart desires that I could have anywhere else, except society, and even that deprivation is not to be considered wholly an evil. . . . My husband is as good company as reasonable mortal could desire."

There was an invasion of cholera then in this country, which came so near to the Carlyles as Dumfries, and in four weeks killed 500 inhabitants out of a population of 13,000. The Carlyles were tolerably safe at Craigenputtock. Carlyle could then report to Dr. John that his wife was "certainly far better in health than while in London," and with the fall of the year, when nature drew her costume of hard dreariness about her, they were exceedingly comfortable within their own four walls. Jeffrey might frown his disapprobation and counsel accommodation in the name of prudence, but his was not their world; *he* "walked in the vain show of Parliamenteering and gigmanity, *they* in the whirlwind and wild piping battle of fate." So let each "without disadvantage go his several ways." Dr. John, whom Carlyle had educated with a rare fraternal generosity and self-denial, now opportunely repaid him the sum of £135. There was chronic impecuniosity, yet never any actual want, at Craigenputtock, where the King's money was little needed. At the worst, Templand and Scotsbrig were in the county. As the year passed, Carlyle repaid to Jeffrey the loan of £50 which had been advanced to enable him to visit London with *Sartor*.

The need of books, and the terrors of winter on the moors, drove the Carlyles to Edinburgh for the first four months of 1833. Edinburgh was cold to him. The prophet was still without honour in his own country; was suspected, disliked, obstructed by whole battalions of blockheads. He was too "dreadfully in earnest" to

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 289.

make new friends among ordinary people. Jesus Christ was to him then "the completest, profoundest of Antigigmen," and "all gigmanity of the Devil, devilish." They were at "the Craig" again in May, without intention or hope of ever attempting to settle for good in Edinburgh. Yet "of solitude he had really had enough." Craigenputtock was now "one of the worst abodes for him in the whole wide world." Its resources were exhausted. Prometheus could not much longer remain chained to the rock. He had "a whole magazine of faculty in him undeveloped." He was outgrowing the stage of the essay; he "could and would write a masterpiece, let it be acknowledged as such or not acknowledged." At such apparently idle intervals, such epoch-making transitional stages, in his life, Carlyle was always restless, discontented; but the smoke of his grumbling was evidence that the fire of new creative thought was burning within. The "masterpiece" came when his *French Revolution* was published. The innocent "peatbog castle" had to wait until 1867 for just and grateful appreciation, when Carlyle confessed in *Reminiscences* that, "for living in and thinking in, he had never since found in the world a place so favourable."

In 1833, the country was disturbed by the elections consequent upon the passing of the Reform Bill. There was no contest in Dumfriesshire, but Carlyle watched the candidature of [1] General Sharpe for the Dumfries Burghs with peculiar interest. "Sharpe prevailed over Hannay," he wrote to Dr. John, "pot over kettle: a shallower mortal never travelled so far in such a trade. . . . In thought," he added, "I am the deepest Radical alive in this island, but allow it to rest there, having other to do."

The summer months brought Edward Irving, then engaged in curious wayside preaching, with any grassy bank for pulpit, to Dunscore kirk, which occupies a conspicuous situation on the brow of a hill overlooking the Cairn Water, with the picturesque pastoral village of Dunscore behind it, and commanding a magnificent view of the amphitheatre of surrounding hills. Carlyle met Irving there, and attended the service, which was held in the kirkyard on account

[1] *Ante*, p. 151.

of the crowd of people, dined with him in the manse, took him to Craigenputtock for the night, and conducted him on horseback to Auldgirth next day, where he joined the coach for Glasgow, the two saints indulging in "a real or (on Carlyle's part) theoretic glass of

DUNSCORE KIRK

"Christ died on the tree: that built Dunscore kirk yonder: that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence."—*Carlyle* to Emerson on Craigenputtock Hill.

ale" at the little wayside inn. This was the last meeting in Scotland between Irving and Carlyle. They had drifted apart; the unlikeness of each now no longer suited the other.

Dr. John, on furlough from Lady Clare, spent the greater part of the summer (1833) at "the Craig." His cheerful temperament restrained the cataract of grumbles and self-accusations. But so soon as Dr. John had left, Carlyle described himself in his *Journal* as "the solitariest, stranded, most helpless creature that he had been for many years." His faith had been, "for a year, under a most sad eclipse." Yet the ink of his personal Jeremiads was hardly dry,

in August, when, as the heather bloomed on the moors, Emerson arrived, by way of Dumfries and Irongray. The unknown young American carried letters of introduction, one of them from John Stuart Mill. He stayed for the night. It was then the friendship had its inception which, in the life of the Carlyles, filled the void left by the loss of Irving; while, on the practical side of things, the visit led to the opening of the American market for Carlyle's books. The religious philosophy of the passage at the close of the essay on *Characteristics* had brought Emerson to Craigenputtock. The two young poets were spiritual twins, recognised each other as such, although they both possessed peculiar differentiating racial attributes. Emerson "found the house amid desolate heathery hills, where the lonely scholar nourished his mighty heart."[1] They walked to the crest of the hill above the farm, sat down there, talked of the immortality of the soul. Dunscore kirk stood out in bold relief on the skyline, the most conspicuous symbol of civilised life there. "Christ died on the tree," Carlyle remarked; "that built Dunscore kirk yonder: that brought you and me together. Time has only a relative existence." To Mrs. Carlyle, Emerson's unexpected appearance was comparable only to the visit of an angel.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

"So live and rejoice and work, my friend, and God you aid, for the profit of many more than your mortal eyes shall see."—*Emerson* to Carlyle, 1835.

In the winter of this year, Carlyle was assisted by receiving

[1] Emerson's *English Traits*.

access to a valuable private library at Barjarg—a country house on the Dunscore side of the Nith some distance above Auldgirth. The literary crop of the year was small—the essay on *Count Cagliostro*, and the story of the *Diamond Necklace* in its first, its rejected, form. He was in a fresh period of sowing; working in pastures new of French history and literature. The winter was brightened for the Carlyles by the marriage at Dumfries of Carlyle's sister Jean ("Wee Craw Jean") to her cousin, James Aitken, the Carlyles being among the wedding guests.

With the opening year (1834), Jeffrey was appealed to in connection with a new Professorship of Astronomy which was about to be established in Edinburgh. As a mathematician, Carlyle had probably no equal in all Scotland; but Jeffrey refused to promote his desire, and administered much gratuitous and pungent rebuke; told him that his writings were "arrogant, anti-national, absurd." The crow could not comprehend the habitudes of the eagle! Carlyle, who never forgot any kindness, suppressed his indignation, "diffusing over all the balm of pity," and laid to heart his mother's remark which revealed the sublimity of her simple faith:—"He (Jeffery) canna hinder thee of God's providence."

The dullness of the passing winter was relieved also by the advent of a Scotch youth, called William Glen, a gifted scholar, whom the Carlyles had met in London. Poor Glen, who was a capital Greek scholar and read Homer with Carlyle, subsequently became insane. Carlyle's mother was with them, too, from Scotsbrig, and trained her "ribe of a boy" to two new tunes. They often sang together, and Carlyle confessed that, when he came in sight of the "huge smoky Babylon" at the removal to London, he found himself humming the refrain of one of his mother's old ballads:—

> "For there's seven foresters in yon forest,
> And them I want to see, see,
> And them I want to see:"

the moral of the song being that of determination to hold one's own in face of the bullying world.

By the end of February, the reaction against the "castle of many chagrins" was complete. They *would* venture upon the ocean of life in London. The editors had grown indifferent; *Sartor* was spoiling the sale of *Fraser's Magazine*. His earlier books were doing little for him. Something had to be done. As with the retreat from Edinburgh, so with the removal to London, the decision was precipitated by a simple, commonplace circumstance. Grace, the servant, was "going home next summer." They, too, would vacate "the whinstone stronghold!" "We said to one another," Carlyle wrote to Dr. John, "'Why not bolt out of all these sooty despicalities, of Kerrags and lying draggle-tails of byre-women, and peat-moss and isolation and exasperation and confusion, and go at once to London?'" Accordingly, the next two months were devoted to the necessary preparations for the migration. Friends in London were seeking for a suitable house. By the end of May, they were established at what is now the Carlyle House in Cheyne Row, Chelsea. "I think," wrote Carlyle in *Reminiscences*, "there was at first something like £300, perhaps £280, to front London with."

This moorland solitude was to Carlyle for Sinai, and the Mount of Olives, and Tabor in turn. Here his genius was transfigured, his commission from the Eternal confirmed. The development of Carlyle's mind and life in these six years is to be measured by the gulf that separates his *Life of Schiller* from the Craigenputtock *Essays*, from *Sartor Resartus*, from the *Diamond Necklace*. At the removal, the battle was unfinished. It was a case of—"Advance, or perish!" The advance had its risks, its perils, but the strength of the Craigenputtock hills was his. In his first letter from London to Alick, he said:—[1] "One of the greatest moments of my life, I think, was when I waved my hat to you and Jamie (at Annan) from on board the steamboat. . . . Courage, my brave brothers all! Let us be found faithful, and we shall not fail."

[1] Froude, *First Forty Years*, Vol. II, p. 437.

# CHAPTER XXVIII

## Carlyle in Dumfries

DUMFRIES has from of old been the capital of the Carlyle Country. It is one of a group of double towns in Scotland. The river Nith divides Dumfriesshire from a portion of the province of Galloway here, and the houses built on the Galloway side of the river are called Maxwelltown, and organised into a separate local administration: so much so that, in consequence, each half of this venerable double town is greater than the whole! Surrounded on all sides by a picturesque country, Dumfries is an attractive residential centre. The population of the double town, in 1901, was 18,888.

The situation of the town on the borderland of Galloway has given it historical and commercial importance, and the history of Dumfries is substantially the key to the wider history of the southern counties of Scotland. Nine centuries of history, thronged with epoch-making events—the Border wars; the clash of steel among local clans; the murder of the Red Comyn by Bruce; the Covenanting struggles; the visit of Charles Stuart on his retreat from Derby; the residence and death of Burns—have conferred premier honours upon the old town by the classic waters of the Nith. The fame of Dumfries in scholarship and letters has travelled far. All other local names, however, are eclipsed by that of Burns, whose sacred dust is the treasure paramount of the citizens; and the town has recently atoned for its neglect of Burns living by an inordinate and pathetically bigoted worship of Burns more than a century dead.

The ruins of Torthorwald Castle, the ancient seat of the Lords Carlyle, may be identified still on the lower slope of the Tinwald

hills, about three miles outside Dumfries by the Lochmaben road and across the Lochar Moss, near to the boundary in olden times between Strathannand and Nithsdale.

Carlyle had close associations with Dumfries early and late in his long career, although he was never more than a visitor. In Carlyle's youth, Dumfries had no commercial rival north of the city of Carlisle; smaller towns now have developed markets and robbed Dumfries in some degree of its former local supremacy. Since Carlyle knew it, the double town has been improved on the side especially of its architecture in the local red freestone. The new Academy would be a noted building anywhere; and no second Carlyle could now complain of the contrast between the magnitude of the jail and the non-existence of libraries, for the Ewart Free Library, as promoted by Mr. Carnegie, is one of the amenities of the town.

*From a portrait in possession of Dr. P. W. Lathom, Cambridge.*

JOHN MCDIARMID, ÆT. 25.

"Did you hear how poor McDiarmid rushed in like a *Pantaleone*, with fifty chosen men at his back, to the very heart of an anti-Catholic meeting at Dumfries, and was received with curses, almost with cudgel-strokes? . . . Had I known in time, I would almost have gone down to help him myself."—*Carlyle* in *Letter to H. Inglis* from Craigenputtock in 1829.

In the summer of 1814, when he was a youth of nineteen newly out of the University, Carlyle crossed from Ecclefechan to be examined here by Rector Thomas White, as a candidate for the post of mathematical teacher in the Annan Academy, and returned successful. Rector White, who was a mathematician of more than local repute,

was Carlyle's friend for many years, and they exchanged notes on abstruse problems in mathematics. After this transitional date, Carlyle was seldom in Dumfries until he came to Craigenputtock. The death of his sister Margaret (1830) was mournfully associated with the town for the Carlyles. In the summer of 1831 he attended the historical banquet to Allan Cunningham. Mr. John McDiarmid was then proprietor and editor of the *Dumfries Courier* —an author of faculty and feeling, as his *Sketches from Nature* and his other books attest. He was the promoter of the Cunningham banquet, at which he presided. Carlyle was on terms of friendly intercourse with McDiarmid. In a letter to Mitchell from Kirkcaldy in 1817, he alludes to a report that Mr. Duncan had "engaged a certain Mr. McDiarmid to assist him in conducting the paper." "I think," he adds, "I have heard of this person's speeches in the forum, and also that his wit was very great." When in Edinburgh in 1821, Carlyle met McDiarmid for the first time at supper in Murray's rooms. He there argued about poetry and politics with "a broad-faced, jolly, speculating, muddle-headed person called Ritchie," while "the dapper little McDiarmid sat by as umpire of the strife." This Ritchie was the founder of the *Scotsman* newspaper. Carlyle described McDiarmid as "showy but unsubstantial." They came together at Dumfries in the Craigenputtock years, and McDiarmid managed to drag Carlyle down from the moors to meet Allan Cunningham. It was an odd function. The report of it occupies four columns of the *Courier*, under date of July 22nd, 1831. The programme of toasts comprehended nearly all the poets, prose-writers, editors, of the day, whether present or absent, and the walls rung with the praise of Wordsworth, Moore, Southey, &c. In proposing Carlyle's health the chairman eulogised him as "a credit to his native district," . . . one who "was only yet approaching the zenith of his fame." Carlyle, in reply, made his [1] first speech in public—a beautiful after-dinner speech, in which he alluded mainly to Burns, whom he described as equally "the minstrel, the poet, and the philosopher." McDiarmid's prescient words, together with the enthusiasm evinced for Carlyle at

[1] See Appendix, p. 275.

the dinner—"the toast was drunk standing, amid loud applause"—and a singular reference to the speech by Professor Wilson in the *Blackwood* for September of that year, show that Carlyle had then already made considerable progress towards recognition in Scotland. Wilson challenged the affirmation of "our dearly beloved Thomas Carlyle" that Burns was "one of the greatest of philosophers," adding—"But, forbid it, all ye gracious Powers, that we should quarrel with Thomas Carlyle." In the autumn of 1832, after Carlyle's return from London to resume life at Craigenputtock for the second period, an epidemic of cholera visited Dumfries. In the double town then, there were 627 deaths from this cause, while in a second visitation in 1848, the double town lost 431 of its inhabitants. The lamentation in 1832 was moving indeed, and panic seized the people. Carlyle wrote a most beautiful letter from "the Craig" to his maternal uncle, who was a stonemason in Dumfries, which is full of virile piety. "I do not participate in the panic," he remarked. "We were close beside cholera for many weeks in London: 'Every bullet has its billet.'"

CARLYLE'S SISTER JEAN.
(Mrs. James Aitken.)
"A most reasonable, clear, and resolute little creature; of her, in all scenes and situations, good is to be anticipated."—*Carlyle.*

The marriage in Dumfries in November, 1833, of Jean Carlyle, the "Wee Craw Jean" of the old Mainhill years, marked the beginning of more intimate relations between Carlyle and the town. Jean was a favourite with the Carlyles; had stayed much with Mrs. Carlyle both at Comley Bank and at Craigenputtock; was clever,

kindly, sarcastic, a voluminous talker, the companion on terms of intellectual equality of her brothers. Carlyle had given her the title of *Die kluge Schäffnerinn*—the prudent manageress. She married her cousin, James Aitken, whom Carlyle greatly liked—"an ingenious, clever kind of fellow." He missed being an artist for want of opportunity, but made a lucrative business for himself as painter and decorator in Dumfries. His daughter, Mary Aitken, was Carlyle's companion in his widowed old age, his amanuensis when he ceased to be able to write. She married her cousin, Alexander Carlyle, and until her death was the fond guardian of her uncle's fame. The Carlyles attended the marriage from Craigenputtock, and Carlyle was evidently impressed by "the gigantic dimensions" of a cold mutton pie, under which the table groaned at the wedding breakfast.

In 1835, after the Carlyles had completed the first year at Cheyne Row, Thomas Aird—poet, essayist in *Blackwood*, &c.—removed from Edinburgh to Dumfries in the capacity of editor of the *Dumfries Herald*. It is stated by his biographer[1] that Aird knew Carlyle at the University. This is doubtful. When Aird matriculated in the Edinburgh University in 1816, Carlyle was on his way from Annan to Kirkcaldy. They might have been introduced in Edinburgh, but there is no evidence of friendship until after Aird had migrated to Dumfries in 1835. Aird's newspaper was a literary product. It was read at Templand, and sent to the Carlyles in London by Mrs. Welsh. One of Aird's literary contributors was George Gilfillan, whose "Gallery of Literary Portraits" first appeared in the *Dumfries Herald* in 1839-40. These Gilfillan essays were signed alternately "G. G." and "Apollodorus." Carlyle's *French Revolution* was published in 1837, and in the *Herald* of October 5th, 1840, a most brilliant and flattering essay appeared on the book, which was signed "Apollodorus." "Yes, there is genius," so burst this rainbow into colour, "in the very titles of thy chapters, O strange Tom of Annandale!" The reviewer declared that Carlyle's book would never pass from the memories of men as long as originality, power, and genius were admired. He intimated

[1] *Memoir of Aird*, by Jardine Wallace.

that Carlyle was expected to write a life of Napoleon by way of sequel, and concluded with the apostrophe: "Hasten, ye sluggish hours, to the birth of this second and superior wonder." Carlyle, who was in need of encouragement then, attributed the essay to Aird, but was informed that Gilfillan was "Apollodorus." Accordingly, in the summer of 1843, Carlyle was introduced to Gilfillan in Aird's house in Dumfries. In the end of the year, Gilfillan contributed an essay on Emerson to Aird's newspaper. In sending a copy of this issue of the *Herald* to Emerson in January, 1844, Carlyle described Gilfillan as "the young Dissenting minister in Dundee . . . whose position as a preacher of bare old Calvinism under penalty of death sometimes makes me tremble for him. . . . I saw him for the first time last autumn (1843), at Dumfries; as I said, his being a Calvinist Dissenting minister, economically fixed, and spiritually with such germinations in him, forces me to be very reserved to him." Carlyle never visited Dumfries without calling upon Aird, and they often walked and talked together in the Dock Park by the river's bank, with the secure old Devorgilla bridge looking down towards them out of the thirteenth century: yet Aird was one of the few gentlemen friends Mrs. Carlyle did not affect. In 1862, she wrote to Carlyle from the Gill:—"I saw, too, Mr. Aird, who you know never did interest me, and who interests me now less than ever!" Nor was the tie between Aird and Carlyle a close one. Their intercourse was obstructed somehow; "the

THOMAS AIRD.

"Wide and deep the eye must go,
The process of our world to know."—*Aird.*

communion of man with man" was not in it; and Carlyle's letters to Aird are commonplace in sentiment, and bear the marks of indifference. As for Gilfillan, Carlyle's love for him was a vanishing emotion. He gave him certain valuable introductions to magazine editors; but, when bored by his too frequent visits, Carlyle exploded one day over Gilfillan's card, behind a half-open door, into the vocables—"that Dundee windbag again!" Gilfillan caught the appalling sounds, and tradition attributes a certain undercurrent of estrangement to the incident. In a lecture on the literature of the three quarters of the last century which Gilfillan delivered everywhere about 1880, he allowed his spite to spoil his lecture, and made no allusion to the writings of Thomas Carlyle. "Strange Tom of Annandale" was never at home in the society of *crypto*-heretics "economically fixed."

"Poor hunger-ridden, quack-ridden Dumfries!" This was Carlyle's atrabilious ejaculation in a letter to his wife from Scotsbrig in 1843. He was getting his wardrobe replenished by the Ecclefechan tailor, and found nothing wrong about the clothes but "the Dumfries buttons," which he "duly execrated and flung aside." Dumfries may produce perennially the average proportion of quacks, but the town has never been "hunger-ridden," nor its inhabitants fit objects of Carlylean commiseration. Carlyle, indeed, liked the town, and was happy here when walking by the Nith, or passing round by the house in which Burns died. His boots were made here by one Shaw, an honest shoemaker; and the cloth he most affected was manufactured in Dumfries. His legal and banking business was inconsiderable for half his life, but the little he had, which grew rapidly in his last twenty-five years, was always managed for him by Robert Adamson, "the honest lawyer of Dumfries"; and in 1853, he possessed the sum of £2,000 to his credit in Dumfries, which for Carlyle was almost dangerous wealth!

Beyond the Railway Station, on the Lochmaben road, in a row of like handsome villas, stands in its own grounds the house known in the Carlyle literature as "the Hill, Dumfries." This house was built by James Aitken. Dr. John Carlyle retired to live with his

sister here, where he died in 1879, sixteen months before the death of his more illustrious brother. Here Carlyle's sister, copying the "kind mother's" example, would smoke a pipe with "Tom" by the fireside. "The Hill" is pathetically associated with the last years

RAILWAY STATION, DUMFRIES.

"Her talk with Turner (by slate and pencil, I writing for her)—ah me! ah me! It was on the platform-seat, under an awning; she sat by me; the great, red, sinking sun flooding everything: day's last radiance, night's first silence."—*Carlyle*, regarding Mrs. Carlyle's last visit to Nithsdale in 1865.

of Mrs. Carlyle. From this house she drove with Carlyle to the Railway Station, when she was on her last visit to the Russells at Holm Hill in 1865, while Carlyle was resting at the Gill. She was in feeble health, suffering much at intervals, yet in mind, in fancy, in conversation, little less sprightly than when in her maidenhood she first saw Dumfries. The train for Thornhill was late, and the Carlyles sat together for some time "on the platform-seat, under an awning." Dr. John, who accompanied them, introduced an old, dumb man called Turner, whom Jane Welsh had known before her marriage. Carlyle assisted with the conversation by writing for

his crippled wife on Turner's slate.[1] "Grand, dumb, and unspeakable," he wrote, after his wife's death, "is that scene now to me."

Ten months later, Carlyle had crossed from Scotsbrig to spend

THE HILL.

"I was sitting in sister Jean's at Dumfries, when the fatal telegrams, two of them in succession, came."—*Carlyle*, concerning Mrs. Carlyle's death in 1866.

the week-end at the Hill before returning to London after his installation as Lord Rector of Edinburgh University. He had sprained his ankle, and was here, "hitching lamely about, his company the green fields and fresh spring breezes," when Mrs. Carlyle died in her brougham in Hyde Park, on that fatal Saturday for him—21st April, 1866. "Saturday night about 9 p.m.,"[2] so he told the mournful tale, "I was sitting in sister Jean's at Dumfries, when the fatal telegrams, two of them in succession, came. It had a kind

[1] *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Vol. III, p. 268.

[2] Froude, *Life in London*, Vol. II, p. 315.

of *stunning* effect upon me. . . . Sunday, about 2 p.m., there came to me a letter from her, . . . the cheeriest and merriest of all her several prior ones. . . . Monday morning, John set off with me for London. Never for a thousand years should I forget that arrival here of ours, my first *un*welcomed by her. She lay in her coffin, lovely in death."

Summer after summer, throughout his prolonged and widowed eventide of life, Carlyle was a familiar visitor in Dumfries. Towards the end, when the burden of natural senility was becoming all too heavy for him, difficulty was experienced in obtaining such a house for him anywhere hereabouts as might be sufficiently remote from the noise of the railways, and beyond earshot of the cock's crow at dawn. In his latest years, the old man walked about mostly at a short distance in front of Dr. John and his niece, musing and meditating alone. He was beset by admirers, and Dr. John was accustomed to put out the red flag beforehand by asking friends "not to stop his brother." The Carlyle Country must have been replete with Carlyleana then to Thomas Carlyle himself, as he recalled the long, swift years of struggle, sorrow, conquest, through which he had passed since he was examined by Rector White for the mastership in Annan; and mere conventional talk with new friends could then but have marred the sacredness of silence. Yet the venerable lone man was much misunderstood in the centre of his own country. Some day, perhaps, after new generations have arisen to study his writings, to appreciate the historical significance of the matchless story of his personal life, there may come upon Dumfries the desire to do honour to herself by erecting some fit local memorial of her connection with Annandale's greatest son, "the foremost figure in English literature."

# Epilogue

IT is the first week of February, 1881. Thomas Carlyle, having completed his eighty-fifth year two months before, lies on his death-bed, life's candle slowly burning to the socket, in the home in Cheyne Row which Jane Welsh had made beautiful and magnetic; where, in the prolonged sweat of brain and heart, he had accomplished his triumphs of the London years, beginning with *The French Revolution*, and ending with the *History of Frederick:* where the foremost minds, the purest and noblest personalities, had counted it the supreme intellectual pleasure London could afford to be permitted to visit. The old man's weary bed is shifted into the drawing-room. While with heroic patience he is waiting for the arrival of the grim messenger—no longer "grim" to him, rather as God's angel—those yet wonderful eyes look round upon his wife's work-box, and other little sacred emblems of her presence there, undisturbed since her death in 1866. On the morning of the 5th February, the message travels everywhere—"Carlyle is dead!" Intellect gives itself up to lamentation. Sorrow possesses the empire of mind. Dean Stanley, himself a disciple, opens Westminster Abbey to his dust. It cannot be! Thomas Carlyle's personal wish is binding, and he must be laid to rest by his mother's side. No publicity is given to the funeral arrangements. Silence and privacy are sacredly observed. The coffin, which is of plain oak, covered with white flowers and one large wreath, is consigned by rail to Ecclefechan Railway Station. On the morning of the day appointed for the burial, Nature has enfolded all the landscape in the "old familiar birth-land" in a winding sheet of snow. The weather is forbidding,

the event unproclaimed. No crowd has gathered at the small, rural Railway Station. Professor Tyndall, Mr. W. E. H. Lecky, and Mr. James Anthony Froude are there. America is represented by Dr. Moncure D. Conway. Journalists are there from near and far. As the forenoon advances, five mourning carriages meet the hearse at the entrance to the Station, conveying the representatives of the Carlyle family. A few other carriages, sent from country houses in the neighbourhood, fall in behind. Slowly, and amid silence made awesome by the noiseless carpeting of snow, the little *cortège* passes down the hill, on the road where, in his young manhood, Carlyle had accompanied his parents from Mainhill to the meeting-house. All the hollow between the village and the "bonny river" lies in the grip of winter's desolation, but the Tower of Repentance, Woodcockair, and Brownmoor, look wistfully on, whitened by the snow. As the procession passes into the "new road," the solemnity of the hour is deepened by the tolling of the Board-School bell. At the foot of the "new road," the hearse must pass directly in front of the handsome Gothic church, which proudly claims descent from the old meeting-house, from the religious fervours of such early Burgher-Seceders as James Carlyle and Margaret Aitken. Around the rude entrance to the graveyard the villagers have collected, curious about seeing the coffin of Ecclefechan's greatest son. Carlyle's local pensioners are there, sorrowing for the loss of the friend whose heart was ever softer than his tongue. No religious

RAILWAY STATION, ECCLEFECHAN.

"He was taken down in the night by the railway. . . Snow had fallen, and road and field were wrapped in a white winding-sheet. The hearse, with the coffin, stood solitary in the Station yard."—*Froude.*

service is read, no prayers are offered. In silent fortitude the coffin is lowered into the grave by the nearest relatives, according to Scottish custom. Thomas Carlyle is buried as he was born, as he lived—an Annandale peasant elevated through the dynamic forces of culture, transfigured by self-devotion to Truth and to the Cause of Man. The "long, rough journey" upon which the "fair child" entered, eighty-five years ago, is ended. After glorious toil, rest is given. [1] "Rest? Rest? shall I not have all eternity to rest in?"

Were the apparent unimportance, on that dreary winter's day, of the burial to be accepted for the measure of Carlyle's influence at the period of his death, it might be maintained that his fame died with him. Far otherwise! Tens of thousands of Carlyle's readers and disciples in America, Germany, India, in all lands, wherever culture has penetrated, as they mourned then for the Master dead, discovered the echo of their prevailing emotion in Milton's lines:—

> "Samson hath quit himself
> Like Samson, and heroicly hath finished
> A life heroic."

Carlyle's fame was inherent in his work, even as spring slumbered potential and ever-reviving in the winter of his funeral, and the pomp and circumstance of glorious burial were in no way necessary in order to perpetuate its bloom. To the nineteenth century Carlyle is related as Samuel Johnson is related to the eighteenth; and Carlyle's appreciation of Johnson anticipated the ultimate verdict of criticism concerning Carlyle himself:—[2] "To the Spirit of Lies, bearing death and hunger, he would in nowise strike his flag. Brave old *Thomas: ultimus Romanorum!*"

[1] *Sartor Resartus*, Book II, Chap. II.
[2] *Lectures on Heroes*, Lecture V.

# Appendix

## CARLYLE'S FIRST SPEECH IN PUBLIC.

## AT DINNER TO ALLAN CUNNINGHAM IN DUMFRIES.

(From *Dumfries Courier* of 22nd July, 1831.)

"MR. CARLYLE rose to return thanks. He felt quite at a loss to express what he felt, in being thus honourably called on before a company of so many happy friends, without wandering into vague generalities which, above all things, he was anxious to avoid. To be a credit to his native district, he must do much more than he had yet done, and he considered that it was still to try whether he merited that compliment. One circumstance had been stated, and he felt gratified that the chairman had done so; he had certainly come down from his retreat in the hills to meet Allan Cunningham at a time[1] when scarcely any other circumstance could have induced him to move half a mile from home. He conceived that a tribute could not be paid to a more deserving individual, nor did he ever know of a dinner being given which proceeded from a purer principle. When Allan left his native place he was poor, unknown, and unfriended—nobody knew what was in him, and he himself had only a slight consciousness of his own powers. He now comes back—his worth is known and appreciated, and all Britain is proud to number him among her poets; we can only say, be ye honoured, we thank you; you have gratified us much by this meeting. It had been said that a poet must do all for himself, but then he must have a something in his heart, and this Mr. Cunningham possessed. He possessed genius, and the feeling to direct it aright. He covets not our silver and gold; is sufficiently provided for within, and needs little from without. It then remains for us (continued Mr. Carlyle) to cheer him on in his honourable course, and when he is told that his thoughts have dwelt in our hearts, and elevated us, and made us happy, it must inspire him with renewed feelings of ardour. Let us now recall from afar the feelings connected with the dust of Burns, and fancy with what honourable pride the lamented bard would have held out the right hand of friendship to our honoured guest. Let us recall his worth, his manly talent, his great integrity, his misfortunes, and his sufferings, arising chiefly from bitter neglect. Burns' works are known to every man in every clime where the English tongue has reached; at home they are sucked in by

[1] Carlyle was writing the last pages of *Sartor Resartus* just then.

our children like their mother's milk, and from them they learn their first lessons in love, affection, and independence, and from them they learn, that

"'The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man alone, the sterling gold.'

They are hallowed to domestic affection ; and, in a word, are co-extensive with the globe itself ; and I may mention a circumstance which is perhaps known to few in this room—namely, that within the last two months I have learned from Goethe, the greatest living German poet, that the works of our immortal bard are under translation in Berlin, so that foreign countries will speedily be as happy in him as ourselves. His life was undoubtedly a dark tragedy ; penury and cold neglect curbed the flow of his noble soul. It is plain that we possess only a tithe of what was in him, for his genius was universal ; he was the first man to strike the seven-stringed lyre to ecstasy ; for he was equally the minstrel, the poet, and the philosopher. Alas, that such a master soul should have been crushed. Alas, that we can only reflect, while we are thus celebrating Allan Cunningham's worth, that Burns was never so honoured while in life. Mr. Carlyle then begged that the memory of Robert Burns should be drunk in solemn silence, as much might be thought that could not be uttered."

# Chronology

| Date | Age | |
|---|---|---|
| 1757 | | James Carlyle born. |
| 1771 | | Margaret Aitken born. |
| 1795 | | Marriage of James Carlyle and Margaret Aitken. |
| 1795 | | Thomas Carlyle born 4th December. |
| 1801 | | Jane Welsh born 14th July. |
| 1806 | 11 | Carlyle goes to Annan Academy. |
| 1809 | 14 | Carlyle goes to Edinburgh University. |
| 1814 | 19 | Carlyle appointed mathematical teacher in Annan Academy. |
| 1815 | 58 | James Carlyle takes lease of Mainhill. |
| 1816 | 21 | Carlyle removes to Kirkcaldy. |
| 1818 | 23 | Returns to Edinburgh. |
| 1819 | 24 | Introduced to Sir David Brewster. Studies Scots Law. |
| 1820<br>1821 | 25<br>26 | Writes "Montaigne, and other Essays" for *Edinburgh Encyclopædia*; also, translates Legendre's *Elements*. |
| 1821 | 26 | Meets Jane Welsh at Haddington; Essays on "Joanna Baillie" and "Goethe's Faust" in *New Edinburgh Review*. |
| 1822 | 27 | Accepts Buller tutorship. |
| 1823<br>1824 | 28<br>29 | "Schiller," first in *London Magazine*, next in book form; *Meister* translated. |
| 1824 | 29 | First visit to London; resigns Buller tutorship. |
| 1825 | 30 | Returns to Mainhill; makeshift residence on Repentance Hill. |
| 1825 | 24 | Jane Welsh visits the Carlyles. |
| 1825 | 30 | Carlyle translates *German Romance*. |
| 1826 | 69 | James Carlyle removes to Scotsbrig. |
| 1826 | 31 | Carlyle married at Templand; settles at Comley Bank, Edinburgh. |
| 1827 | 32 | Essay on "Richter"; Essay on "State of German Literature." |
| 1828 | 33 | Essay on "Werner"; Essay on "Goethe's *Helena*"; Essay on "Goethe." |
| 1828 (May) | 33 | Retreats to Craigenputtock; Essay on "Burns"; Essay on "Heyne." |
| 1829 | 34 | Essay on "German Playwrights"; Essay on "Signs of the Times"; Essay on "Voltaire"; Essay on "Novalis"; Jeffrey at Craigenputtock. |
| 1830 | 27 | Carlyle's sister Margaret dies. |

| Date | Age | |
|---|---|---|
| 1830 | 35 | Carlyle writes Essay "On History"; Essay on "Richter and De Stael"; Essay on "Richter Again"; first sketch of *Sartor Resartus* written; writes *Cui Bono?* and *Four Fables.* |
| 1831 | 36 | *Sartor* finished by end of July; translates *Luther's Psalm*; attends dinner to Allan Cunningham in July; leaves Craigenputtock on visit to London in August; first Craigenputtock period ends; in London from August. |
| 1831 | 30 | Mrs. Carlyle arrives in London on 1st October. |
| 1831 | 36 | Carlyle's "Cruthers and Jonson" and "Peter Nimmo" in *Fraser's Magazine*; also, the "Beetle"; the "Sower's Song"; "Tragedy of the Night Moth"; and Essay on "Schiller." Reviews Taylor's *Historic Survey of German Poetry*, also writes *Characteristics*, in London. |
| 1831 | 36 | Essay on the "Nibelungen Lied" appears in *Westminster Review*; "German Literature" appears in *Foreign Quarterly.* |
| 1831 | 30 | Dr. John Carlyle appointed physician to Lady Clare; *Sartor* rejected in London. |
| 1832 | 75 | Death of James Carlyle. |
| 1832 | 37 | Carlyle writes Sketch of his father; second Craigenputtock period begins in April; writes *Death of Goethe*; writes *Goethe's Portrait*; Essay on "Biography" in *Fraser*; Essay on "Boswell's Johnson" in *Fraser*; Essay on "Goethe's Works" in *Foreign Quarterly*; Essay on "Corn Law Rhymes" in *Edinburgh Review*; Carlyle spends winter in Edinburgh; translates Goethe's *Tale* and *Novelle* for *Fraser.* |
| 1833 | 38 | "On History Again" in *Fraser*; Essay on "Count Cagliostro" in *Fraser.* |
| 1833 | 28 | Carlyle's sister Jean married in November. |
| 1833 | 38 | Carlyle writes first copy of *Diamond Necklace*; "Sartor" begins to appear in *Fraser*; Essay on "Diderot" in *Foreign Quarterly.* |
| 1834 | 39 | Settles in London in May; writes *History of French Revolution*; period of severe struggle; manuscript of first volume of *French Revolution* burned; "Sartor" runs through *Fraser.* |
| 1835 | 40 | Writes *French Revolution*; "Death of Edward Irving" appears in *Fraser.* |
| 1836 | 41 | *Sartor* published in America, with preface by Emerson; writing *French Revolution.* |
| 1837 | 42 | *French Revolution* finished on 12th January; first course of lectures, in Willis's Rooms, in May; *French Revolution* published; *French Revolution* published in America at Emerson's risk; "The Diamond Necklace" appears in *Fraser*; Essay on "Mirabeau" in *Westminster Review*; Essay on "Parliamentary History of the French Revolution" in *Westminster.* |
| 1838 | 43 | Essay on "Sir Walter Scott" in *Westminster*; *Sartor* appears in book form in London; Essay on "Varnhagen von Ense's Memoirs" in *Westminster*; second course of lectures, in Edward Street, Portman Square. |

| Date | Age | |
|---|---|---|
| 1839 | 44 | Essay on the "Sinking of the *Vengeur*" in *Fraser*; third course of lectures in Edward Street, Portman Square; *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* published; "Petition on Copyright Bill" in *Examiner*; *Chartism* published in December by Fraser. |
| 1840 | 45 | Fourth course of lectures—on *Heroes*; secures the foundation of the London Library; *Heroes, Hero Worship, &c.*, published. |
| 1841 | 46 | Declines to be a candidate for Chair of History in the Edinburgh University; writes preface to English edition of Emerson's *Essays*. |
| 1842 | 47 | Mrs. Welsh dies—Craigenputtock reverts to the Carlyles; Essay on "Baillie the Covenanter" appears in *Westminster*. |
| 1843 | 48 | Studying the Cromwell period; *Past and Present* written in the first seven weeks of the year, and published immediately; *Historical Sketches* written (published in 1902); Essay on "Dr. Francia" in *Foreign Quarterly*. |
| 1844 | 49 | Declines Brewster's offer of a Professorship at St. Andrews; writing *Cromwell*; Essay on "An Election to the Long Parliament" in *Fraser*; writes preface to Emerson's *Essays*, second series. |
| 1845 | 50 | *Cromwell's Letters* published. |
| 1846 | 51 | Six days in Ireland. |
| 1847 | 52 | Visit to Rochdale; Emerson at Cheyne Row; "Unpublished Cromwell Letters" in *Fraser*. |
| 1848 | 53 | £1,500 in Dumfries Bank. Articles in *Examiner*—"Louis Philippe": "Repeal of the Union": "Legislation for Ireland": "Death of Charles Buller" (see *Rescued Essays*). Articles in *Spectator* on "Ireland, and Irish Regiments." |
| 1849 | 54 | Article on the "Nigger Question" in *Fraser*; "Arboretum Hibernicum" in *Nation*. |
| 1850 | 55 | "Fragment about Duels" in *Leigh Hunt's Journal*; *Latter-Day Pamphlets* appear. |
| 1851 | 56 | *Life of Sterling* published; begins study of *Frederick*. |
| 1852 | 57 | Tour in Germany. Letter on the "Opera," in *Keepsake*. |
| 1853 | 82 | Carlyle's mother dies in December. |
| 1854 | 59 | Carlyle begins upon *Frederick*. "Suggestions for a National Exhibition of Scottish Portraits"—Society of Antiquaries—*Proceedings*. |
| 1855 | 60 | Essay on the "Prinzenraub" in *Westminster*. |
| 1856 | 61 | At *Frederick*. |
| 1857 | 62 | At *Frederick*. |
| 1858 | 63 | First two volumes of *Frederick* published. Second tour in Germany. |
| 1859 | 64 | Continues at *Frederick*. |
| 1860 | 65 | Continues at *Frederick*. |
| 1861 | 66 | Continues at *Frederick*. |
| 1862 | 67 | Continues at *Frederick*. |
| 1863 | 68 | "Ilias (Americana) in Nuce" appears in *Macmillan's Magazine*. |
| 1863 | 62 | Accident to Mrs. Carlyle in autumn. |
| 1864 | 63 | Mrs. Carlyle's illness. |

| Date | Age | |
|---|---|---|
| 1865 | 70 | Carlyle finishes *Frederick* in January. Elected Lord Rector of Edinburgh University. |
| 1866 | 71 | Installed Lord Rector; delivers Inaugural Address. |
| 1866 | 65 | Mrs. Carlyle dies. |
| 1867 | 72 | Carlyle's "Shooting Niagara and After" appears in *Macmillan's Magazine*; Sketches of *Jane Welsh*, *Edward Irving*, and *Francis Jeffrey* finished at Mentone. |
| 1868 | 73 | Prepares *Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle*; bequeathed Craigenputtock to Edinburgh University as "Welsh Bursaries." |
| 1869 | 74 | Rest. |
| 1870 | 75 | Letter to the *Times* on Franco-Prussian War. |
| 1871–2 | 76–7 | *Early Kings of Norway*, and *Portraits of John Knox*, prepared for *Fraser*; published in book form in 1875. |
| 1873 | 78 | Prussian Order of Merit received. |
| 1874 | 79 | Grand Cross of the Bath declined. |
| 1875 | 80 | Medal and Address from 120 eminent Scottish contemporaries. |
| 1879 | 78 | Dr. John Carlyle dies. |
| 1881 | 86 | Carlyle dies on 5th February; burial at Ecclefechan. |

## POSTHUMOUS.

| Year | |
|---|---|
| 1881 | *Reminiscences* (Froude). |
| 1882 | *Irish Journey* of 1849; *Last Words, On Trade Unionism*, etc.; *First Forty Years* (Froude). |
| 1883 | *Correspondence with Emerson; Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle.* |
| 1884 | *Life in London* (Froude). |
| 1886 | *Early Letters* (Norton). |
| 1887 | *Correspondence with Goethe; Reminiscences* (Norton edition). |
| 1888 | *Letters* (Norton). |
| 1892 | *Last Words—Wotton Reinfred*, etc.; *Rescued Essays; Lectures on the History of Literature.* |
| 1897 | *Montaigne and other Essays.* |
| 1898 | *Historical Sketches.* |
| 1903 | *New Letters and Memorials of Jane Welsh Carlyle.* |

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